THE UNSEEN WORLD

REV. A. M. LÉPICIER O.S.M.

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AN EXPOSITION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

IN ITS RELATION TO

MODERN SPIRITISM

BY THE

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Cum nobis constet opus cui titulus The Unseen World, *an Exposition of Catholic Theology in its Relation to Modern Spiritism*, a Reverendissimo P. Mag. Alexio Maria Lépicier Ordinis nostri Procuratore Generali et in Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide Sacrae Theologiae Professore conscriptum, sana et hisce praesertim temporibus utili doctrina esse refertum, lubenti animo permittimus ut, servatis ceterum de iure servandis, typis edatur. In quorum fidem, etc.

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THE UNSEEN WORLD

INTRODUCTION

THE attempt to hold intercourse with the inhabitants of the unseen world is not, as some seem to imagine, a practice peculiar to these modern times. It was resorted to long before the Greeks inquired of Apollo in his temple at Delphi through the mouth of the Pythoness and before the Romans consulted the Sibylline oracles at Cumæ and at Tibur. Nor is it a practice confined to civilized and cultivated races. The savage man, too, in his lonely hut on his desert island, has at all times been in the habit of evoking the spirits of the other world, whether he believed these spirits to be genii, disposed to favour and to benefit mankind, demons bent on working harm or mischief, or the souls of the dead seeking for rest amidst their former haunts and environments History records how extensively spiritistic practices were carried on during the middle ages, and what severe laws, both civil and ecclesiastical, had

to be enacted in order to check what was then held to be a dangerous and harmful superstition.

It is only in the method which is employed in the evoking of these manifestations and in the circumstances under which they take place that any difference can be said to exist between the practice of ancient times and that of these modern days. There is absolute identity in the aim which underlies them—that aim being the obtaining of answers to various questions, the solution of difficult and perplexing problems, and the exhibition of phenomena transcending the known powers of nature.

There is, however, a difference between them which should not be left unnoticed here. While the phenomena obtained were in times past ascribed to beings of a purely spiritual nature, and in no wise connected with matter, they are now held to be due to the souls of the dead—to departed human beings at one time inhabiting this earth and, like ourselves, incarnate in material bodies. And this modern belief would seem to find support not only in the oft-repeated assertion of the spirits themselves, but also in the results of experiments recently conducted by renowned and well-known English and foreign scientists.

The object of this book is to set forth, as clearly and concisely as possible, what the teaching of Catholic Theology is on this difficult subject, and

where the pathway of safety may be found, not only for Catholics but for all believers in historic and dogmatic Christianity. For it is in the historic Christian Faith alone that we have the true standard by which the momentous problems presented by modern spiritism can be fairly and adequately judged.

Our object then will be to discover whether, according to this standard, we can reasonably hold the belief that we are, by means of these spiritistic practices, really put in communication with the spirits of the dead, and whether we may look upon these communications as containing newer and truer disclosures as to the spirit-world and to spirit-life, and as to history and science and the general moral and intellectual progress of mankind.

Very many of the so-called spiritistic manifestations reported in books and journals have, upon closer examination, been proved to be the result of mere trickery and fraud. It is nevertheless admitted that there are certain phenomena which, after rigid examination, cannot possibly be accounted for by these means, and that it would be an arbitrary and highly unscientific proceeding were we to deny the operation of the invisible spiritual world in connection with them. We might thus be barring the way to the attainment of a more accurate knowledge of beings who

indeed are hidden from our sight, but who would seem to be no less real than those material and visible agents to the existence and action of which our senses constantly bear witness.

Granting, therefore, the objectivity of the phenomena in general, our purpose will be to investigate their proper causes and thus to arrive at a better knowledge of their nature and of the relation in which they stand to the general moral order of the universe.

The first question which, in connection with such an inquiry, presents itself to the mind, and upon the right solution of which the whole problem of spiritism depends, is, "Are these invisible spirits all of one kind, or are there, besides the spirits of the dead—or to use the modern phrase, discarnate souls—other spirits who, although little known to us by reason of the subtlety of their nature, may nevertheless be held responsible for the phenomena in question?"

And in the event of its being shown that such other spirits must be admitted to exist, and that the phenomena are attributable to them, the further question which would present itself would be, "What are we to hold as to the extent of the knowledge of these beings and as to the general lawfulness of spiritistic practices?"

From this consideration we propose to pass on

to an inquiry into the state of the human soul after death :—the extent of its knowledge of the affairs of earth, and the mode and nature of its activity, finally seeking to determine to which of these two classes of the inhabitants of the spiritual world the phenomena usually occurring at spiritistic *séances* are to be ascribed.

As such an exposition of the teaching of Catholic Theology on this subject must necessarily be a brief one, it is not proposed to draw upon the immense store of theological tradition which the Church has accumulated in the course of ages, nor will reference be made to ancient and modern writings treating of spiritism and its phenomena. Our treatise might thus easily develop into a voluminous work. We merely intend to draw from theological sources any such material as may be necessary for our purpose, and also to take into consideration the current teaching of modern spiritists and the various systems of interpretation which have at different times been constructed with a view to an explanation of the phenomena.

We would point out, however, at the very outset that, while we attach the deepest importance to the results which recent scientific inquiry into this subject has achieved, we do not see our way to adopting such terms as are employed by some spiritists in a sense wholly different from the

natural and primary meaning attaching to them. The use of such vague and conventional terms in this connection would seem to us to be detrimental to the cause which we have in view. Catholic Theology has a terminology of its own, which has been sanctioned by the consent of ages and which is well adapted for defining and describing the things which lie beyond the reach of our natural senses. It is to this terminology that we propose to adhere throughout this work[1], adding any such explanations for the lay reader as may be necessary in order to ensure the clearness and conciseness of the argument.

We would further observe that while the spiritistic manifestations themselves are within the reach of our sensitive faculties, their causes must be sought for in the invisible order, no sensible representation of them being sufficient to give us an accurate idea as to what they are in themselves.

The problem therefore with which we are here concerned, depriving as it does the reader of any

[1] We have thus purposely abstained from employing the term "spiritualism," even though it is the one generally adopted in this country in connection with these phenomena. As our souls are spiritual substances, and God Himself is a pure spirit, the term spiritualism should properly be employed to signify our intellectual operations, the invisible manifestations of God, or His interior operations in the human soul.

sensible foundation upon which to fix his attention, and necessitating a careful survey of the whole field of Catholic Theology, presents a difficulty which is unfortunately the cause of so many discrediting and rejecting Catholic teaching. This is a difficulty however which, we feel confident, all earnest minds, sincerely seeking after truth, will know how to conquer and to overcome.

We shall endeavour to set forth in these pages, as faithfully and as clearly as possible, what the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors reflecting the mind of the Catholic Church is on this deeply-important subject, and shall draw our deductions from those fundamental principles upon which the laws of the universe are founded, submitting each statement to the judgment of the Church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth[1]."

The phenomena shown to be taking place in connection with recent experimental research are, as is well known, many and wonderful, and the problems presented by them are of the greatest possible importance and significance. It is only the serious study of them, in the light of Catholic Theology, which can lead the inquiring mind to a discovery of the real agents responsible for their production, and enable it to determine the question as to the lawfulness and morality of spiritistic practices.

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 15.

We have those solemn words of our Lord ringing in our ears:—"*Take heed that no man seduce you: for many will come in My Name, saying: I am Christ, and they will seduce many*[1]."

[1] Matt. xxiv. 4 5.

CHAPTER I

The Angelic World

That the phenomena of spiritism have excited and continue to excite the deepest interest amongst thoughtful persons is evident from the fact that science is seriously engaged in seeking for the causes to which they are to be attributed. These researches have led to the construction of various hypotheses which may, roughly speaking, be summed up under two heads. The first attempts to account for the manifestations by the action of a purely natural and material agent of a conceivably subtle and complex character. The second attributes them to the operation of an intelligent order of beings of an immaterial and spiritual character.

In connection with the first supposition, scientists have assumed the existence of a certain magnetic or radiating neurotic fluid, material in its nature and yet possessing none of the properties of matter. This fluid, it is claimed, can be neither seen nor felt, nor subjected to

proper scientific examination, but must nevertheless be admitted to be endowed with extraordinary and at present very imperfectly known powers.

The other hypothesis connects the phenomena with the souls of the dead who may be supposed to have acquired, by their separation from the body, a condition and power superior to that of their former state, and who have consequently become capable of producing such remarkable effects in the natural world.

But, clear and plausible as such a simple division may appear at first sight, it would be well to consider whether it really exhausts the possibilities of the case, and whether there may not, besides these two agencies, be a third one to which these extraordinary effects may be attributed.

This question forms the *raison d'être* of the present chapter. It will be devoted to the inquiry whether there are, in the invisible order, pure spirits, free from matter and distinct in kind from the souls of men separated from the body, and if so, what knowledge of material things such beings may be supposed to possess, and what power over the elements of the visible universe they may be said to have.

THE ANGELIC WORLD

SECTION I

EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF PURE SPIRITS

Nothing is more common and frequent in human life than allusion to some unknown invisible spirits, distinct from the souls of the dead, who are believed to be surrounding us and to be exercising a certain influence upon the course of our lives. It is in the works of the poet that this popular belief has most frequently found its fullest expression. The question which we have to consider here is whether this belief has any foundation in fact, and whether there really exist, besides the souls of the dead, other spiritual agents who have never been united to a material body, and who are consequently wholly different from them in kind.

In seeking to answer this question we shall first inquire what natural reason has to say on this matter; and secondly, whether the extraordinary phenomena occurring in spiritistic *séances* may be taken as sufficient evidence for the existence of such pure spirits.

We then propose to indicate what the teaching of the Catholic Church is on this subject, and what the real nature of these pure spirits is.

I. *Harmony between the Visible and Invisible World.*

It is certain that we could not, by the light of

reason alone, arrive at any indisputable conclusion as to the existence of pure spirits. It is true that the philosophers of Greece and the rhetors of Rome believed in the existence of demi-gods, of genii and demons. It is furthermore beyond doubt that a belief in beings of an invisible nature, exercising an influence, for good or evil, over men, has existed at all times and in all countries. But it is equally true that the sages of antiquity have frequently been found to be in error, and that such a belief, however widely spread, has for itself no sufficient evidence to make it acceptable beyond all possibility of doubt.

A survey of the constitution of this world, on the other hand, and of its several parts, although insufficient to demonstrate conclusively the existence of such invisible beings, distinct from and superior to ourselves, is nevertheless apt to predispose the thoughtful mind in favour of such a belief, and, if proposed by lawful authority, to prepare it to accept the fact as a fundamental truth.

As regards ourselves, our nature, although undivided, is made up of a body and a soul. By reason of our bodies we rank superior to all beings of an order entirely material; why, then, should we not, by reason of our souls, occupy the lowest place amongst beings wholly spiritual in their essence, forming as it were a link between

the world material and immaterial, between substances visible and invisible, between body and pure spirit? Is there not in such an unbroken chain of beings an ample sphere for the manifestation, in a variety of forms, of the divine likeness which, after all, is the end of all creation?

As man is the apex of the material world, it is not unnatural to look for the complement of that spiritual perfection, which is but shadowed forth in him, in a class of beings of a superior order, free from all matter, however subtle we may conceive this to be.

Again, a survey of the nature of our own intellectual powers leads us to the same conclusion, viz., that the existence of substances, wholly spiritual, is consistent with the harmony of the universe.

We know, from personal experience, how narrow are the limits within which our intellect works. Its proper sphere is so limited to the things of this world, that in order to form an idea of an immaterial being, and especially of God, we must needs have recourse to sensible images. Although these sensible images enable us to fix the attention on those higher objects, they nevertheless prevent us from seeing them with clearness and distinctness. Thus, when we wish to look at the sun we use a shaded glass which, by toning down its dazzling light, enables us to fix our

eyes upon it, although it at the same time prevents our seeing it in all its glorious brilliancy. And just as we can imagine other material beings, endowed with the power of looking directly at the sun without blinking, we can imagine intelligent spiritual substances, having mental perception wholly independent of sensible images and a spiritual sight compared with which ours is that of an unborn child.

Such, then, are the evidences which a survey of the universe affords us of the existence of pure spirits different in kind from the human soul.

It should, however, be observed here that these and similar considerations, although plausible in themselves, do not fully prove the existence of such spiritual substances. The only conclusion we can draw is, that the existence of pure spirits is fitting and natural, though not absolutely necessary, or to put it in other words, that the reality of spirits different from our souls, i.e. spirits that are neither united to a body in oneness of nature (which is the case with our souls during this present life), nor have any relation to a body (as our soul will continue to have after death) is in harmony with the order of the world. But the point at issue here is not the mere fittingness of the existence of such spirits, but their objective reality. This, however, cannot be settled with certainty by the light

of reason only, since the general order of the universe, and the relations of its parts, are not perfectly known to us.

The visible creatures that people the universe, their mutual dependence, the order and harmony which bind together the different parts of the world, are for us sufficient evidence to prove the existence of God, the Maker of all things. For the consideration of the universe necessarily leads the mind to the knowledge of a first cause, one in nature, and infinitely good and perfect; hence St. Paul says: [1] "*For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power also and divinity.*" But all the material creation is insufficient to lead to the indisputable conclusion that pure spirits, distinct from God, really exist. For, whereas God's likeness shines forth in this world, which is the work of His hands, the likeness of those pure spirits is not sufficiently impressed on the universe to enable us to be certain of their existence. The world was not made by them, and can continue in existence without them.

While, then, the arguments proposed above tend to show that it is fitting and consistent with the harmony of the universe that spirits, superior to ourselves and distinct from God, should exist,

[1] Romans i. 20.

they do not entitle us to assume the fact of their existence beyond any possibility of doubt. The reality of pure spirits, peopling the invisible world, would remain to us a mystery, were it not for a special revelation from God, of which we shall speak hereafter.

II. *The Spiritistic Phenomena not Sufficient Evidence for the Existence of Pure Spirits.*

It might be urged, in contradiction of the present assertion (that we cannot by the light of reason alone arrive at any certain conclusion as to the existence of pure spirits), that the ordinary phenomena of spiritism are sufficient evidence of the objective reality of such spirits. We know from the history of spiritism of both ancient and modern times, and from recent investigations of scientists, what these phenomena are. The laws of nature, it may be added, are sufficiently known to us to enable us to say that these phenomena cannot be due to the action of any visible agent. From our study of the powers of the human soul, on the other hand, we must conclude that it cannot, when separated from the body, have any such control over the elements of matter. Must we not then infer the existence of certain wholly invisible spiritual agents who, by their peculiar nature and

operation, may be supposed to be instrumental in producing the phenomena referred to?

Our answer must be in the negative. These manifestations are not sufficient to establish with absolute certainty that spirits, distinct from the separated souls of men, do really exist. For, granting that such effects surpass the known powers of nature, they can nevertheless be explained without a necessary reference to the agency of spiritual substances. Indeed, God could, by His infinite power, produce all these effects without the operation of secondary causes, in which case His immediate action alone would be responsible for the same.

If it be objected that these manifestations cannot be ascribed to God, since they are in most instances apt to produce evil results (a weakening of the mental and physical powers), and that that would be equivalent to making God the author of evil, it may perhaps still be answered that much of this evil arises from an abuse, rather than from a right use of these mysterious practices.

Again, if it be insisted that some of these manifestations are of a low moral character (as when manifestly contradictory statements are made, or there is a deliberate incitement to sin), it must nevertheless be observed that, although these circumstances clearly indicate the presence

of some immaterial agent, distinct from God's personality and of an evil nature, they do not constitute a sufficient foundation for a general belief in the existence of purely spiritual substances. Isolated facts can never be adequate evidence for a belief that pervades the whole of mankind.

And even though these signs may be a presumption in favour of the conclusion that invisible agents, other than human souls, are at work, it would still have to be shown what these spirits are, and whether yet other spirits of a more beneficent nature people the invisible world. The many and various theories put forward of late by scientific inquirers with a view to explaining the phenomena of the *séance*-room are ample proof of what we here advance.

III. *The Adequate Proof of the Existence of Pure Spirits.*

Such, then, is the insufficiency of natural reason and of sensible experience to prove the existence of a spiritual world distinct from our own visible universe.

This insufficiency, however, has been supplemented by the teaching of the Catholic Church, in the definition found in the fourth Council of Lateran[1]: "(God) *By His almighty power created*

[1] Cap. 1. Firmiter.

together in the beginning of time both creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, namely the Angelic and the earthly, and afterwards the human, as it were a common creature, composed of spirit and body."

This definition was no new addition to the deposit of the faith, for clear mention of the existence of these spiritual beings is to be found, not only in the works of the Fathers, but also in Holy Scripture, in which great numbers are spoken of as peopling the invisible world, disposed in beautiful order, as a host in battle array. It may be sufficient to quote here the following words[1]: "*Adore Him all you His Angels,*" and[2]: "*Their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.*"

According to Catholic teaching, these pure spirits are to be acknowledged as quite distinct in kind from the souls of men, whether united to the body as in the earth life, or separated from it by death as in the future life.

Some ancient writers have thought that the pure spirits of which we speak were originally of one kind with the souls of men. They have held that these spirits were created before the human body was formed, nay, long before matter existed, and that none of them were destined, by God's original intention, to be united to a material body. According to them it would only be in

[1] Psalm xcvi. 7. [2] Matth. xviii. 10.

consequence of some particular sin that this union took place in the case of some of them, the spirits who persevered in holiness remaining in a purely spiritual state. The distinction between the human soul related to a body as to the complement of its nature and pure spirits free from such relation would, according to these writers, be but a distinction in degree, not one in kind; the line that divides the souls of men from the pure spirits of which we speak would mark an accidental, not a substantial difference.

But such views are discountenanced by the teaching of the Catholic Church, which holds that the pure spirit is so essentially different from the human soul, that it cannot be substantially united to a body, while the latter is received into the body which it animates from the very first moment of its creation.

Now it is impossible that the human soul should so overstep the boundaries of its own nature as to become of one kind with a pure spirit, even though this be of the lowest order. For even after death the soul remains what it was in its earth life. Each soul is numerically distinct from other souls, and specifically so from pure spirits. An evolution of the human soul into an angelic nature is in fact contradicted by the voice of nature, our natural craving being for some accidental perfection, *not for a change in*

kind. Such a change, moreover, in order to take place, would imply the very destruction of the soul itself, seeing that it could not attain to a higher specific form without suffering a *substantial* change and the consequently previous destruction. Indeed, the evolution of a being into a substantially distinct species is contrary to Catholic teaching.

We propose later on to treat of the nature of the human soul; what concerns us here is the nature of the pure spirit.

IV. *The Nature of Pure Spirits.*

'It is difficult for us, in our present state of life, to clearly understand what the nature of an angel is.' Hindered as we are by our material surroundings, and all the conceptions of our minds being necessarily accompanied by material and sensible images, we cannot, except with great difficulty, arrive at an exact notion of the essence of a pure spirit. All we can do is to attempt to form some approximate idea of what a spiritual substance is, or else altogether give up speculating about its power of action as regards this visible world.

Now by the words *pure spirits* we mean intelligent beings of so subtle a nature as to be in no wise composed of matter, however refined or ethereal we may conceive that matter to be.

Such beings would thus be imperceptible to the keenest and most perfect of our senses, and transcend the entire order of the material and visible world. It would be a mistake, therefore, to conceive of them as belonging to a class intermediate between beings which are endowed with and beings which are without a bodily form, such as the credulity of the middle ages has imagined Sylphs to be—substances of an airy nature possessing the power of light and swift movement. The beings of which we speak here are not in any sense composed of matter. But they must not only be conceived to be intrinsically free from all matter, but also in no wise substantially united or related to it.

The immateriality of the beings we are now contemplating is the reason why they are properly called spirits, the term *spirit* implying an idea of something altogether above matter and free from all essential relation to it. Hence this term should not properly be applied to designate the human soul. For, although the human soul too is of a spiritual nature, yet, since it is ordained to inform a body, and to constitute with it one individual substance, it is not a pure spirit except in a much wider sense of that term.

Again, since pure spirits are endowed, as we shall see hereafter, with a mental perception far superior to ours, they are also called intellects,

intelligences or minds. To speak with greater exactness, the intellect is only a part, as it were, of the angelic nature; that is to say, it is that faculty by which these pure spirits know the truth. But as we often use the name of a part to mean the whole, so by intelligences we usually understand, not the power of understanding of spiritual substances, but the spiritual substances themselves.

On the other hand, as the natural condition of these spirits brings them into greater proximity to God than any other creatures can enjoy, and places them midway, as it were, between man and the Deity, they are used by God as special envoys appointed to deliver the divine message to the human race; hence the custom of calling them Angels[1]. But there are good and evil angels as we shall see hereafter.

An Angel, then, is a pure spirit—that is, a being neither composed, as men are, of two different substances, body and soul bound up together in unity of nature, nor united or related to a body as our soul is. There is nothing material in Angels, not the faintest shadow of a body, however

[1] From the Greek ἄγγελος—a messenger. The word ἄγγελος is also sometimes used in connection with the blind forces of nature, inasmuch as they obey God's command: in this sense may be taken the words of Ps. ciii. 4: Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα, although St. Paul, in quoting these words (Heb. i. 7), evidently applies them to the pure spirits whom we are now considering.

subtle or imponderable we may imagine such a body to be. A point is something too material to represent an Angel's simplicity; the lightning that flashes through the sky gives no idea of his vigour and energy, and the irresistible force of a most subtle fire cannot compare with the might of these wonderful spirits. God has created all things in this world for the manifestation of His infinite perfections, and Angels are by nature most beautiful mirrors, reflecting the spirituality of the Godhead.

An Angel is, however, but a created being, and therefore finite, wherein lies the distinction between him and God, Who is a pure spirit but of infinite greatness, and Whose essence contains all imaginable perfection. Thus, whereas God, by reason of His immensity, fills the whole universe, and knows and can do all things, an Angel's being is limited, and the field, both of his knowledge and action, is confined within certain boundaries, beyond which he is powerless.

In order to solve the problem regarding the real agents of spiritistic phenomena, we must now inquire, first as to the degree of knowledge, and secondly, as to the power possessed by angelic substances.

SECTION II

ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE

As many of the phenomena occurring in spiritistic *séances* give evidence of a very remarkable amount of knowledge possessed by their authors, the question which naturally presents itself is: to whose agency are these phenomena to be attributed? But this question can only be answered by inquiring into the knowledge possessed by pure spirits.

What, then, is the nature and extent of that knowledge? How do angels acquire it? Does the knowledge of one angel differ from that of another? What are the objects which the angelic mind comprehends? Can angels know future events and the secret thoughts of the hearts? How can we, in our present life, get into communication with the world of angelic beings?

The answer to these questions is anything but easy, as the world of spirits lies altogether beyond the field of our experience. But Catholic Theology, worked out by the searching minds of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, has long since given on these points precise explanations, outside of which all other statement must prove inadequate.

To some readers these explanations may

perhaps appear somewhat far-fetched, and some may be inclined to consider them as ingenious assumptions, rather than objective truths. Yet they are based upon the necessary laws of truth and inference, and as such cannot be lightly put aside. Moreover it should be remembered that an easy and obvious explanation of the knowledge and power of beings altogether beyond our own sphere, bears in itself the stamp of inadequacy and must be looked upon with strong suspicion. The higher the truth we are considering, the less commonplace also must be the explanation of it. The reader must therefore be prepared to accept the explanation which Catholic Theology supplies, however subtle it may seem, or else give up the hope of at all arriving at a right understanding of the nature of angelic knowledge.

I. *The Nature and Extent of Angelic Knowledge.*

It should be observed at the outset that we only intend to speak of the natural knowledge of angels, that is to say of that knowledge which is proportionate to their condition. Catholic Theology teaches that besides this natural knowledge some of them also possess a superior knowledge which consists in the immediate vision of the Divine Essence, not common to all angels, but granted to the good only. Our purpose here being the examination of spiritistic phenomena in their

relation to the natural knowledge and power of angels, a consideration of this superior knowledge need not engage our attention.

Now it is manifestly much easier to form an accurate notion of the knowledge which is attainable by the various forms of sensitive life than of that which is proper to the angelic substances. Nay, the error into which we are likely to fall here is the very opposite of that which is apt to attend our examination of the knowledge of animals. For, while the intimate connection between our sensitive and rational faculties makes us prone to overrate the extent of the sensitive powers of the brute creation, the absence of any clue to the realm of angelic substances causes us to underrate their intellectual worth, our tendency being to measure them by the narrow compass of our own mental faculties. Yet the difference between the power of comprehension of the angelic mind and that of the human mind is an immense one. There is a far greater difference between the intellectual power of an angel and that of the most gifted amongst men, than there is between that of the cleverest scholar and of the most ignorant peasant. And, although an angel's intellect is not his own substance, just as our intellects are not our own substances, yet he possesses such penetration, that he is able, by a single glance, to take in the whole field of science lying open to his perception, just

as we, at a glance, can take in the whole field of vision lying exposed to our view.

But to arrive at a better understanding of the extent of the angelic knowledge, let us imagine three concentric spheres in which three kinds of spirits move respectively. The first is the sphere of the human intellect, the radius of which is short, being limited to the nature of material objects, as man himself is material and therefore unable to adequately comprehend the nature of spiritual beings such as angels are. This does not, of course, preclude the possibility of our seeking after such knowledge, in the same way in which an astronomer will use his instrument in order to search the heavens and examine the heavenly bodies, even though he may be unable to gain such adequate knowledge of them as he may desire.

Beyond this sphere, and comprehending it, is the sphere in which the angelic intellect moves. This sphere is infinitely greater than the first and embraces not only the things of this material universe but also the purely intellectual objects of the unseen world. The angelic intellect, however, does not come into possession of this sphere of knowledge by a gradual and laborious process as is the case with man. The human mind, in childhood, is, as it were, asleep, and only gradually awakens to the things of this world until it finally realizes that, beyond this material world, there is

another world which is open to thought only. The angelic intellect, on the contrary, does not pass through such a prolonged process of development. From the very first moment of its existence it is able to grasp the objects which are within its sphere, and it continually, and at its own pleasure, adverts to them, experiencing no labour or fatigue in the process and moving in the dazzling light of the purely intellectual world as in its proper element.

And beyond this second sphere there is yet another of infinite extent, a sphere comprehending and exceeding the first two spheres in an incomparable degree. It is the sphere of the Divine Mind. Of this, however, we do not propose to speak at present.

II. *How Angels Come into Possession of Knowledge.*

In order to be able to further understand what is the nature of the angelic knowledge, we must first examine the particular manner in which the angelic intellect acquires the knowledge peculiar to its nature. This manner differs widely from that which experience tells us to be peculiar to our own nature.

We pass gradually from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge. *Angels*, on the other hand, possess, from the very commencement of their

existence, the whole store of knowledge peculiar to their state.

Bound up as the human soul is with its own body, and depending upon it for its operations, it has to make use of the external senses and of the imagination in order to arrive at truth. And this process is not an instantaneous but a gradual one, so that we must first apprehend external objects before our minds can attain to a general knowledge of things and become capable, by further reflection, of distinguishing one thing from another.

Thus the ignorance of an infant only ceases when its senses are sufficiently developed to enable the understanding to apprehend the things surrounding it in their objective reality. And even then its knowledge is not perfect. It has only general terms wherewith to designate the different objects which it apprehends, and it is not until it has advanced in years, and until its mind has increasingly unfolded, that it becomes able to designate each single object by its proper name. A child's intellect, therefore, because of the union of the body with the soul, follows the course which we observe in, for instance, the growth of plants. The seed, after having first been opened to the action of the earth, advances in growth by the assimilation of other and subtle elements, until finally having become a plant, it yields fruit after its kind.

But with angels it is not so. Having been created in the full perfection of its nature, the angelic mind neither develops by gradual increase nor does it suffer any decay. It is always in possession of its own proper light and knowledge without that knowledge having to pass by consecutive steps from the mist of morning to the splendour of midday brightness, and without its light disappearing into the darkness of night or even waning into twilight.

How then can we best form an idea of the nature of angelic knowledge? By remembering that, as the things of this world came forth from God in their nature and being, so also all spiritual light, by reason of which intelligent creatures have in some degree been made like unto Him, knowing themselves and the things of this world, and above all God the Creator of this world, proceeds from God Who is essential light.

Now as angels are on the one hand superior to us in nature, and on the other have no external senses wherewith to place themselves in contact with the outer world, it follows not only that they receive a much greater abundance of divine light than we do, but also that they receive it immediately from God, the supreme light of the world.

And what is that light which they receive from God? It is not, as it would seem, the mere

power of understanding nor the capacity of knowing things. The light which angels receive from God consists in those images or mind-pictures (which are the representations of external objects) to which the angelic intellect can turn in order to know and understand the things of this world represented by them. The angelic intellect then is a living picture, or better still, a living mirror which the angel need only contemplate in order to know the things of this world. The possession of knowledge in angels is not therefore the outcome of study or of effort, nor does its acquisition involve any such strain or fatigue on their part, as is the case with us who cannot come in touch with the outer world except through the medium of our senses. The intellectual operation of an angel consists in a placid gazing on those representations or images existing within its mind, and that from the first moment of its creation.

There is, however, a growth in the knowledge of angels. For, as they do not know future events, as we shall show hereafter, it is necessary that their knowledge should increase when those events actually take place; revelation, moreover, can be made to them either by God, or by other angels and even by man. But this growth is not the result of new images forming in the angelic mind, the images infused from the beginning being sufficient for that purpose and representing

these events as they take place in course of time, thus enabling the angels to know new events with all their attendant circumstances.

III. *How the Knowledge of One Angel Differs from that of Another.*

Having thus shown what the origin of the angelic knowledge is, we will now pass on to a consideration of the difference which exists between the knowledge of one angel and that of another.

Although there is, as we have pointed out, for all angels a common mode of apprehension (i.e. simple reference to the images of things impressed upon their mind by God), there is, nevertheless, a difference in the *degree* of that apprehension. And this difference is determined by the degree of perfection which the individual angel naturally possesses. No two angels being exactly alike, the power of understanding and the consequent use of that power naturally vary in as many degrees as there are angels.

Now, in what does this difference of understanding consist? It consists in the difference of images or representations of things which, as we have already stated, were impressed on the angelic intellect from the beginning, those images being in proportion to the perfection of the mind or intellect of the respective angel.

And wherein does the difference between the images or representations of the higher angels and those of the inferior ones consist? In the higher angels these images are more universal, and consequently of wider range, whilst in those of a lower order they are more particular and less comprehensive; hence, while the natural knowledge of a superior spirit has more oneness and simplicity, that of a lower spirit is more divided and, as it were, broken up into parts. Just as the sun, in the perfection of its transcendent light, may be said to contain all the different artificial lights that man's ingenuity produces on earth, so the knowledge of a superior spirit contains, in its universal images, those fragmentary images which are in the minds of spirits of an inferior order.

A stranger, upon first arriving in a city, can only come to a distinct knowledge of it by successively traversing its separate streets and squares; but if he could ascend to a lofty tower, he would be able to take in, at a single glance, not only the city itself, but also the entire country surrounding it.

Thus an angel of an inferior order can embrace at one glance but a limited number of objects, whilst the superior angel can, in its survey of the world, take in a far wider field of vision. And this is in accordance with the general law of the

universe, that as the superior creatures, as being nearer to God, partake of the divine perfections in a greater measure and, at the same time, in a more simple manner than do the inferior creatures, so also the images of things radiating from God, the centre of all knowledge, should pass into the angelic intellect with a perfection inversely proportionate to the distance at which each single intellect naturally finds itself from Him.

IV. *Angelic Illumination.*

But there is, in connection with this natural difference between the knowledge of one angel and that of another, one further remark to be made. It is the way in which pure spirits of a superior order can enlighten those of an inferior one. We refer to the subject of angelic illumination, a subject on which the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church has throughout the centuries met with unanimous acceptance.

The knowledge possessed by angels, of which we have so far spoken, is the knowledge of natural truths which all angels possess alike, however different their individual degree of apprehension. But there are, besides these natural truths, truths of the supernatural order, such as the mysteries of Faith and the multiform workings of grace in the souls of men.

Now these truths depend on God's essence, and

the manifestation of the same is subject to the determination of His free will, so that they cannot be reached by the natural power of an angel. For the disclosing of these truths to a spirit's intellect a special revelation from God is needed. In this, however, as indeed in all His works, God does not set aside the agency of secondary causes, but rather makes use of them in order to attain His ends. Just as in the production of inanimate and living things He called into operation material causes, so in the manifestation of these supernatural truths His wisdom has ordered that, while the higher intelligences should be directly illuminated by Him, they should at the same time act as intermediate agents in the impressing of these images on intelligences inferior to themselves. And there is thus, descending the scale of spiritual intelligence, both an active and a passive influence in each separate spirit, in such a way however that the first spirit, while illuminating others, is himself illuminated directly by God alone, and the last one, while being illuminated, imparts no illumination to another.

Now the manner in which this spiritual enlightenment takes place is not unlike that which a teacher adopts when imparting scientific knowledge to his pupil. A pupil is unable to at once take in all that his teacher knows. The latter has to adapt his teaching to the mental capacity

of the former. And for this purpose he has to seek to set forth, by means of examples and of particular truths, those universal principles which these particular truths represent and which his own mind perceives at a single glance. Thus it is that a higher angel accommodates himself to the capacity of a lower one, presenting to the intellect of the latter, in a circumscribed form, those universal truths of which he himself has a simple and undivided apprehension. Hence the ray of divine light, emanating from God, becomes divided and is somewhat diminished in intensity, as it were, as it reaches the less perfect spiritual substances, i.e. those furthest removed from the source of divine light and truth.

From this we may gather a confirmation of what we said before, that both the natural and the supernatural knowledge possessed by the different angels is not equally perfect, just as the knowledge of a pupil is necessarily inferior to that of his teacher. There is, however, this difference between the two processes. In the pupil the knowledge of truth is gained by a gradual growth or assimilation, whereas in the angel it is acquired instantaneously. Again, it may and often does happen that the pupil outstrips his master and surpasses him in knowledge; but an inferior angel can never hope to reach the perfection of knowledge possessed by a superior one.

Lastly, we may observe that what we have said of angelic illumination has reference only to the good spirits, evil spirits being excluded from this intellectual intercourse, from the fact that they are cut off from the supernatural order and from friendship with God. They may, of course, and probably do communicate their thoughts and desires to each other in the form of questions and answers, and they may also receive some special revelation from good angels, but in neither case can this be considered an illumination in the proper sense of the word, as this communication does not bring those fallen spirits nearer the fountain head of truth which is God.

V. *Objects Comprehended in Angelic Knowledge.*

Passing on to a consideration of the particular objects which the angelic knowledge embraces, we have to inquire whether that knowledge is limited to a certain class of objects, or whether all the various branches of learning are open to angels.

It is not easy to accurately determine what the field of the angelic knowledge may be, seeing that that knowledge differs from ours both in kind and in origin. This much, however, we may safely say: The amount of knowledge possessed by the lowest angel immeasurably surpasses that possessed by the most perfect human mind. No

man, for instance, can excel in more than one branch of learning, and prolonged study only goes to disclose the fact that even in that one branch what remains to be known far exceeds that which is known. The acquisition of fresh knowledge, moreover, often makes it necessary for us to correct and modify our previously formed opinions and notions.

But these imperfections do not exist in the knowledge infused into spiritual substances. In them those images to which we have referred in previous paragraphs are not only representative of the general principles which rule each particular science, but they also distinctly convey all the details virtually contained in those principles, so that one and the same image informs the angelic mind of each particular point contained in that science. There is, therefore, no confusion in the angelic mind when it turns from the consideration of one object to that of another.

To exemplify this we may imagine an angel turning his attention at one time to the image or representation of the natural sciences. He would thus read therein not only the great principles which underlie all experimental research, but also every detail of our knowledge of Geology, Astronomy, Botany, Zoology or historical Archæology, all which details are not disclosed to us except by patient study and observation. At another time

the same angel might, with equal ease, contemplate both the principles and details of the various arts, knowing immediately and accurately, without effort on his part, the various combination of notes which enter into the forming of a musical composition or the proportions of colours necessary for the production of a painting and so forth.

Again man has to expend time and energy in order to gather accurate information respecting each separate class of any particular species and of each distinct individual of any given class, together with its specific characteristics and properties. But an angel knows, at a single glance, from the image representing say the animal nature, not only the various species of animals existing, but also each single individual of the species that has ever existed, and also its particular properties and means of action. And the same applies to any object whatever which is to be found in nature, whether that object be organic or inorganic, material or spiritual, visible or invisible.

Thus it will be seen that human science is far surpassed by the science of the angelic mind, both in extent and precision, notwithstanding the circumstance that there exists a difference in the knowledge of different angels. This difference, as has already been pointed out, consists in the fact that fewer images suffice for the higher angels, while a greater number of them are needed by

angels of a lower degree. And as the angelic mind is not limited by time or space, and no distance, however great, is any obstacle to the exercise of its knowledge, it will easily be understood how vastly the knowledge of these spiritual intelligences surpasses our own or indeed anything we can imagine.

Nevertheless, however great the comprehension of the angelic mind may be, we have to exclude from its sphere of apprehension two things:

(1) Future events depending on a free cause, and

(2) The secret thoughts of the heart.

On these two points we propose to dwell more fully, since they will be seen to be of the utmost importance in determining the relation existing between spiritistic phenomena and the angelic world.

VI. *Angels do not know Future Events and the Secret Thoughts of the Heart.*

When we assert that events depending on a free cause and the secret thoughts of the heart cannot be known by angels, we mean that they cannot be known by them without a special revelation on the part of him on whom either of these two heads of knowledge respectively depends. Now future events depend on God, and the thoughts of the heart depend on God and ourselves. The revelation of the first, therefore, can only be made by

God and of the second only by God or by us. We speak of course of that true and certain knowledge which precludes all possibility of doubt.

It is admitted, however, that angels, by the acuteness of their intellects, may know future events depending on physical laws, and this with sufficient certainty. For the book of nature is open to the angelic mind, the mechanical laws that govern the universe too are known to them, so are the properties of things and their mutual relations. Angels can therefore, without fear of error, foretell events depending on the natural forces of the elements, such as tempests, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or meteoric showers; they can also, with a certain degree of probability, foretell future events depending on these phenomena, such as the loss of human lives, the destruction of cities, famines or pestilences.

The physical constitution of each man, too, is perfectly known to the angelic intelligence, so that it can foretell with approximate accuracy the future state of health of a particular person, as also the probable length of his life, except of course in the case of unforeseen accident.

But events depending entirely on the free-will of the Creator or on that of creatures are wholly unknown to the angelic intelligence, because the mind of God is known to no created being and the mind and will of man are open to God only.

It is for this reason that the prediction of future events depending on free causes and the disclosure of the secret thoughts of the heart, both of men and of angels, have always been held as signs of God's immediate intervention and consequently as true miracles.

And even with regard to future events dependent on natural causes we say that the angelic knowledge may at times be deficient, seeing that it cannot contemplate cases of accidental modifications, such as God, to whom the entire universe is in complete subjection, may occasionally decree, according to the order of His all-comprehending providence. Surely no angelic intelligence could ever have foreseen such things as, for instance, the fall of the walls of Jericho by the sound of the Jews' trumpets [1], or the cleansing of Naaman by his washing seven times in the river Jordan [2].

The angels' knowledge being therefore limited as regards future events depending on a free cause, and also as regards the secret thoughts of the heart, it follows that utterances on such matters can at best be regarded as mere cunning guesses on their part, nay, such utterances must necessarily be attributed to spirits of an immoral and unlawful character, whenever they are presented by them as indubitable truth. In answers, therefore, given to questions of this sort we may safely

[1] Jos. vi. 20, 21. [2] 4 Kings v. 14.

discern the presence of angels of a corrupt moral order, no being, solicitous for truth, being likely to assert something as absolute truth, of which it cannot possibly have any accurate knowledge.

It will be remembered that the utterances on such subjects as these, made by the oracles of ancient times, admitted of a variety of interpretations—conclusive evidence surely of the immoral character of the source from which they emanated.

Such, however, is the subtlety of spirit-intelligences, that by piecing together the things they really know and binding them up with certain conjectures which they are able to make by reason of their insight into nature, they can be marvellously successful in deceiving men and in creating the impression that they have a greater knowledge of the future and of the secret thoughts of the heart than they really possess.

As regards future events depending on a free cause, angels are then in precisely the same condition in which we are : it is impossible for them to know with certainty what God or any creature whatsoever will do, except by a special revelation from Him on Whom all future events depend and Who has immediate control of the will of every creature. But, as regards the manifestation of the secret thoughts of the heart, there exists a difference between men and angels which will be more fully explained in the succeeding paragraph.

VII. *The Manner in which we Communicate with Pure Spirits.*

In order to clearly understand how we may enter into communication with the invisible world by a manifestation of our secret thoughts, we must first consider what takes place in our intimate communications with our fellow-men.

In order that I may know what another man is thinking, it is not sufficient that he should be willing to lay bare to me his thoughts. There is between us a dividing wall in the shape of our bodies, which are the envelope of the soul and which prevent the free intercourse between our minds. This impediment is overcome by the signs which we use in order to manifest our ideas, that is, by speaking, writing or gesticulating. But, in the case of angels, there is no such impediment. The one thing necessary for communication between spiritual intelligences is that one should be willing to manifest his thoughts, and that the other should turn to consider them.

This manner of communication holds good also in the case of human beings with pure spirits, for to the latter the body constitutes no impediment; consequently, if we wish to lay bare our secret thoughts to an angelic being, it suffices that we be willing to do so, and that the angel should direct his attention to our thoughts.

The same cannot be said altogether of an angel's thoughts with regard to man. Man cannot immediately read into the angel's mind, even though the latter be willing to manifest his inmost thoughts. We cannot have understanding of anything in this life without the concurrence of material images, called phantasms, which produce a special modification of our brains corresponding to the representation of the objects which are to be conceived. But this modification of the brain may be worked by an angel, who, as we shall see further on, has power to modify matter as he may wish and to give to the brain that special disposition necessary to understand the corresponding objects.

This point must be specially borne in mind, although it must not be inferred therefrom that, because the modification of our brains is known to angels and corresponds to the objects we have in our minds, our inmost thoughts are, even against our will, made manifest to angelic intelligences.

An angel may very well know the modifications of our brain, all the movements of our nervous system, and yet be ignorant of our thoughts. For thought is above matter, and although in this present state of life we cannot exercise our thinking or mental faculty without the concurrence of our sensitive nature, yet there are many ways in

which we can make use of one and the same organic modification; our free-will can give to our mental operations so many turnings and direct them to such different ends, that it is quite beyond the power of the shrewdest among angelic beings to know against our will what is our actual purpose or what is the drift of our mental operation.

This is also the case with regard to angels among themselves: for the angelic mind can make whatever use it pleases of those images or representations in the contemplation of which its knowledge consists; that is, it can turn that knowledge either to good or evil purposes, and this in an infinite variety of ways. It is precisely this moral determination of the will which constitutes those secret thoughts proper to rational creatures and which are naturally unfathomable to every being except to God.

It is so true that angels cannot, with absolute certainty, know what our inmost thoughts are, that, naturally speaking, they cannot know the moral state of our souls. According to Catholic teaching, the angelic intelligence cannot, for instance, by its natural power know whether we are in a state of grace and friendship with God or whether we are in a state of mortal sin and separated from the source of all Good. These things surpass the angels' natural capacity, hence

they cannot, without a special revelation from God, discern the just from the sinners, although they may, from outward signs, draw conjectures as to the state of the soul. Our mind and heart is a stronghold, impregnable, without our permission, to angelic shrewdness.

But, should that permission be given, either by explicit sign or in an implicit manner, how far-reaching becomes angelic knowledge! Not only are distant events, hidden facts or scientific truths, made manifest to these mysterious beings in virtue of the intuition which they have of natural things, but also secret thoughts, desires and intentions of men may become known to them. And, as they may communicate this knowledge to man in virtue of the power they possess over the elements of this world in general and particularly over the human brain, it is easy to infer that the most extraordinary revelations may take place through the mediumship of angelic substances—revelations surpassing all that we can possibly conceive. All this, however, will become clearer when we come to consider the extent of the power of spirits over matter and over the faculties of man himself.

What we may gather from the present consideration is that the angelic knowledge being of such a wide range, there is not one among the intellectual or psychological manifestations taking

place in spiritistic *séances* which may not be ascribed to the agency of these immaterial substances which we call pure spirits or angels. What we shall therefore further have to inquire into is whether these manifestations not only *may*, but *must* be ascribed to these spirit-intelligences; and as a closer investigation into Catholic Theology will lead us to distinguish a twofold class of angelic substances—those of a high standard of morality whom we designate by the common term *angels*, and those of a depraved moral character, whom we name *demons*—it will yet remain to be determined to which of these two categories the spiritistic phenomena now engrossing the attention of so many, even amongst scientists, are to be attributed.

SECTION III

THE POWER OF ANGELS IN THE UNIVERSE

We have said that although the angelic substance is devoid of all matter, it nevertheless possesses a certain natural power over the elements of this world and over man himself, which may account for those phenomena which, at first sight, appear to us so very extraordinary. It becomes important that we should now clearly state what the ground for this assertion is and what are the extent and nature of this power, so

that we may be able to form a clear judgment as to whether the various phenomena, which are brought about through spiritistic practices, may be ascribed to the agency of these pure spirits.

The questions, then, which present themselves are: Have angels a real power over matter? Can an angel create matter or substantially alter bodies? Can he move them from one place to another? In what sense can he be said to be in one place rather than in another? What is the extent of angelic power? Can an angel assume a body and exercise therein the functions of life, and what powers does he possess over the faculties of man, over his intellect, his will? Finally, we must seek to determine, by a comparison of the works which transcend the powers of nature and which we call miracles, and the works peculiar to angelic substances, taking also into account that phenomenon known as the compenetration of bodies, how far the marvellous effects obtained through spiritism may be ascribed to angelic agency.

In the consideration of these points we shall have to guard against falling into one or other of two equally dangerous extremes, namely, of either overestimating or of undervaluing the extent of angelic interference in the regulation of the universe.

But it should be noted that all that will be said in this connection is based upon the fact that these pure spirits are God's agents and ministers in the administration of the world, and that, without in anywise interfering with the action of physical agents, they rule the universe as instruments of His infinite power, so that both the blind forces of nature and the wise direction of pure spirits combine in leading the world to the end fixed for it by Divine Wisdom. We have to begin, then, by stating the grounds of angelic power over matter.

I. *The Power of Angels over Matter.*

It is the teaching of the ancient philosophers as well as of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, that the physical order of the universe, together with its different material parts, is immediately subject to the administration of spiritual beings.

The reason for this is to be found in the general principle that, in this world, there is unity and order, and that order demands that the inferior elements should be subject to beings of a superior order, much in the same way in which human society is governed. Under a supreme magistrate, holding the fulness of authority, there are disposed, in an orderly manner, other officers upon whom degrees of authority are bestowed, and who, according to their rank and dignity, exercise that

authority over certain individuals. In the same way the material world is inferior in nature and perfection to the world of spirits, and it is natural that it should be ruled and governed by the latter.

It would not be accurate, however, to say that the ruling of the natural universe was God's first object in the creation of angels. These noble spirits were created in order to reflect God's perfect spirituality and to give Him, in their own being and in their own language, endless praise and glory. But this glory they can also give to God by ruling, according to the plan marked out by Him, the elements of matter and the various parts of this world.

We do not think that there can be much doubt as to the accuracy of this statement; for it must be evident to our senses that in us, who are composed of body and soul, the latter governs and rules the operations of the former. It is then but natural to think that the material world is ruled and governed by angelic substances, just as an inferior is ruled and governed by his superior. Both philosophical and ecclesiastical tradition have recognized, in the angelic spirits, a power of superintendence over the elements of matter.

This doctrine, however, should not be so understood, as though the production of each individual plant or animal were the work of a separate

angel. In recent years the view has gained ground amongst spiritists that the world is the material work of an infinite number of immaterial souls, which collectively go to make up the one great soul of the universe.

Considering the fact that the many thousand vegetable species are all formed out of the same elements, i.e., hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and potassium, with the admixture of soda in the case of maritime plants, they thought it impossible that these few elements should combine in such a way as to form that great variety of organisms which we see. The artistic skill with which each branch of a tree springs forth from its parent stem and gives rise, in its turn, to yet other more slender branches, these again producing leaves to serve as organs of respiration, while no part of one tree obstructs or inconveniences another, seemed to them to point to the existence of immaterial individualities, who may be conceived to be busily at work in each separate production, from the geometrical forms of crystals to the more complex tissues of animals.

This panpsychism, it may be observed, has a certain affinity with Kant's well-known theory that the human soul is, even in this life, in close communication with all the immaterial beings of the world of spirits, in which it produces and from which it receives reciprocal impressions, of which,

however, we are not generally conscious while we continue in good physical health.

The teaching of Catholic Theology differs widely from this. Matter, it says, having of itself no quality, had, in the beginning, to receive from God who created it, those subtle properties the operations of which would bring about, in the course of time, all the subsequent changes in the universe. Again, matter being of itself inert, it became necessary that, in order to pass from that state of initial inertia to a state of activity, it should receive from Him, Who is the cause of all activity, its first impulse. These two effects, then, viz. the endowment of matter and its initial impulse, took place in the beginning according to extremely wise and far-reaching physical laws, and they go to account for all the subsequent transformations in the universe and also for the maintenance of that equilibrium, on which the peace and harmony of the world depend.

Nothing forbids, of course, that we should acknowledge, among the natural factors of material changes, natural selection or the struggle for life; but, unless we admit in this conflict of the elements a superior force, emanating from God and exercised according to the laws established by Him, these factors must be held to be insufficient to preserve the harmony of the world. Were it not for these laws which direct the various

displays of life, would not those parasites, for instance, whose power of multiplication knows no limit, soon so cover the earth as to prevent the proportionate distribution of vegetable and animal life thereon? But God's laws endure for ever, and that same action by which He first created the world also preserves it in the harmony of its several parts.

The world, then, is ruled by God's action, as by a first and universal cause of life and movement. From Him power was given to the elements of this world to exercise on each other a moving influence, and in this way the action of that first cause, general in itself, is, as it were, diversified according to the agents which are at work. In fact, it is in this reciprocal influence of the elements of matter that the origin, both of physical phenomena and chemical transmutations, is to be found.

Although the laws fixed by God in the beginning would, strictly speaking, be sufficient to preserve the world's equilibrium, yet as the order of nature has it that there should belong to the angelic substance, as superior in kind to the visible world, a certain power over the elements of matter, God has so ordained that angels should exercise this power to the manifestation of His greater glory, to which all is ultimately ordained.

Now, the visible world is made for man in order that he may thereby be led to know and love his Creator, Who is his first beginning and his last end. The ordinary course of this visible world, on the other hand, is not sufficient to convince man of those supernatural truths which he has to believe, and for which he does not find in the universe sufficient evidence. It is necessary, then, that derogations from the natural course should take place, in order that man may be led to acknowledge the fact of supernatural revelation, as often as it may please God to grant him a special disclosure of His divine Essence, and thus elevate him above his nature. And here precisely is the field opened, by God's ordinance, for the display of the angelic power over the elements of matter. For when God chooses, for the confirmation of divinely revealed truth, to cause some derogation from the ordinary course of the universe, He entrusts the execution of these derogations to those spiritual substances which, by nature, are superior to the visible world. And, in this, angels become the proper ministers of the great King, Whose glory they are thus the means of promoting.

Thus it is that the Fathers and Doctors of the Church acknowledge the operation of particular angels placed over plants, animals, and even over man himself. Holy Scripture also speaks of the

angel who has power over fire[1], and of the angel who presides over the waters[2]; and St. Augustine says that each distinct species, in the different realms of nature, is governed by angelic power[3]. It is also the common teaching of the Catholic Church that each man has his guardian angel, who protects and defends him throughout the course of his natural life.

To conclude, then, we say that to angels belongs the right of ruling and of directing the material elements of the world, by presiding over those derogations from the laws of nature which God ordains in the course of time for the manifestation of His glory.

In reality all the power which angels possess over matter was given to them to the end that they should thereby promote God's glory. It is not impossible, however, that some of them should deviate from the path of righteousness and should make such use of that power as to work destruction in God's Kingdom. The question whether this has actually taken place will be considered hereafter.

What we have to inquire into now is the nature and extent of this power. Has the angelic substance universal sway over the whole of the physical universe? Can it create matter or impart to matter any shape it may desire?

[1] Apoc. xiv. 18. [2] Ibid. xvi. 5.
[3] Lib. lxxxiii. Quaest. Qq. lxx x.

II. *Whether Angels can Create Matter?*

The answer to this question is to be found in a right understanding of the principle laid down in the preceding paragraph, namely, that inferior things are subject to superior ones, not in an absolute manner, but in the measure of authority which the superior possesses over the inferior. Thus a magistrate has not complete authority over the actions of his subordinates, but only in the measure conferred upon him by those laws to which he is himself subject.

It is in the same way that, speaking of the creation of matter, we assert that this lies altogether beyond the scope of angelic power. God alone can create matter, that is, He alone can produce it out of nothing, because He alone is, by essence, the Supreme Being, and He alone can draw creatures out of nothing, not of necessity but out of pure goodness, giving to each one its own being, which after all is nought else but a faint participation in the divine likeness. Hence, whatever power of action an angel may have over the physical world, that power must always of necessity presuppose the creative action of God.

This being so we conclude that, whatever the power be which an angel may possess over this material world, it is limited to modifying or

altering the bodies contained therein in a manner which we will seek to explain in the succeeding paragraph.

III. *Whether Angels can alter Bodies, or move them from Place to Place?*

In speaking of alterations and modifications in bodies we must, first of all, distinguish between alterations or changes that are intrinsic and alterations or changes that are only extrinsic. The first implies either a substantial change, or a change in the quantity or quality of a body; the second merely a local change.

The latter is illustrated by the transference of our own bodies from one place to another by some such means as walking or riding, by the alternate rising and falling of the waters of the ocean, by the moving of the planets in the immensity of the heavens, and in general by the removal of any object from one place to another. These are changes which take place in time and space, but which leave the substance of the objects thus moved unaltered.

The former sort of alteration is exemplified in the destruction of a piece of timber by fire, in the absorption of food by the stomach of an animal, in the transformation of gasses under the influence of chemical analysis. These objects, ceasing to exist in their previous nature, a thorough change

has taken place in them and a new substance has succeeded to the old. Ashes are not wood, flesh and blood are not bread and wine, oxygen and hydrogen are not water. On the other hand, in the case of illness creeping into a man's system or of a child growing into the adult form, the substance is not changed, yet an intrinsic change which we call accidental has taken place.

Now are angels capable of intrinsically changing or modifying material objects either by causing them to lose their nature, and thereby becoming something wholly and essentially different in character, or by producing a modification in their intrinsic qualities and in their natural quantity?

The answer of Catholic Theology is that this is impossible, because an angel, being a pure spirit, cannot immediately impress upon existing matter a new form or essence, whether substantial or accidental, as material agents can do when acting upon objects of their own kind.

It is the likeness existing between material agents that makes it possible for one to bring about an immediate intrinsic change in the substance, quality or quantity of the other; while it is the want of resemblance in their respective natures, between spirits devoid of all matter and material beings, that makes it impossible for the former to alter, by a direct immediate action, the substance of the latter.

Hence a spiritual or angelic being cannot, by a direct or immediate action, change the substance, quality or quantity of material objects, much less can it produce the smallest living animal, plant, or even cell. If, then, an angel is at times found to produce some living thing in a manner apparently resembling instantaneous creation, or to cause any kind of substantial or intrinsic change, this is really due to his skill in bringing to maturity the germs of those species previously chosen with intelligent discernment.

But if an angel cannot do any of these things, he certainly can—and this has been admitted by all the ancient philosophers—transfer a body from one place to another, and that with the greatest possible ease, and with a rapidity which surpasses the most perfect of mechanical contrivances. Indeed, if ever he can bring about an intrinsic change, substantial or accidental, in bodies, this is originally due to that power which he possesses over the transfer of the same.

The reason for the possession of this power in angels lies in this general law, that the highest element in the things of a lower order is subject to the sway of those beings that pertain to the superior order: hence the noblest property of bodies, which is their capability of being transferred from one place to another, lies within the proper field of action of pure spiritual substances. That

the capability of being transferred from one place to another is the noblest property of bodies, is evident: for whereas a disposition to inward change in bodies evinces a state of imperfection, as though they had yet to arrive at their intrinsic completeness, a disposition to local movement, on the other hand, supposes its subject to be already in a state of intrinsic perfection and to be tending only to something extrinsic, such as in reality is the acquisition of a new place in the universe.

The power of moving bodies and of transferring them from one place to another is then the link that puts the invisible spiritual substances in immediate contact with the material world: and so local movement, in the elements of the universe, is the proper field of action of pure spirits, by which means they can also, in a mediate way, effectuate considerable intrinsic changes, whether substantial or accidental, since the bringing together of material elements may prove to be, under certain circumstances, the originating cause of the most wonderful productions.

It should here be observed that, although the angelic energy displayed in moving force be to us incalculable, yet must it be conceived of as admitting of various degrees, according to the position which each angel occupies in the great scale of spiritual substances. As a star of greater magnitude embraces in its sphere of activity a

larger number of heavenly bodies than a star of inferior magnitude, so a superior angel may have the power to move, for example, the whole earth, while an inferior one may only be able to affect a smaller planet.

But an angel, however great his power may be, cannot move the whole universe, because an angel is himself, with regard to the world, as a part in relation to the whole, he being in his own way contained in the universe, that is, as immaterial substances are, which are not circumscribed by the dimensions of place, yet are so in a place that they are not in another; hence the moving power of each angel, be he ever so highly placed, is necessarily restricted to a determinate portion of the world.

But we must now particularly explain what we mean when we say that an angel is in a determinate place, seeing that upon this depends the right understanding of the display of angelic power over the material elements of the world in the way declared above.

IV. *How an Angel may be said to be in a Place.*

An angel, being a spiritual substance, and therefore above time and space, cannot be said to be in a particular place by reason of his own substance; he is so, however, by the direction or application of his power to a specific material

object. It is by reason of his power or rather his activity over specific material objects, that he may be said to be localized.

In other words, the application of the angelic power in moving or changing a specific body, as also in influencing man in the way we shall explain hereafter, that is, by illuminating his intellect, or moving his senses, is the reason why he may be said to be in one place rather than in another. And, being thus in one place, an angel cannot, at the same time, be in another: he cannot by one and the same action reach different objects or different places. He may, however, change places instantaneously, by transferring his action from one specific point to another, without its being necessary for him to pass through intermediate places or objects.

By the fact that an angel's energy is determined to a specific place or object, he takes possession of that place or object, that is, he occupies, fills, and circumscribes it in such a way as to exclude its occupation, in like manner, by another angel. That particular place or object becomes his domain, without, however, his substance being essentially united to it as our soul is to our body, and without that same object being assumed by the angel into the unity of his person or changed into his nature.

And, in this complete and absolute occupation

by the angel of a particular material object, whether mineral, plant, animal, or man, we find the explanation of that marvellous control (possession) of some material objects on the part of unseen spirits, which would seem to baffle the most painstaking investigations of modern scientists. The animate or inanimate object which the angelic power, good or bad, occupies, becomes his stronghold, to the exclusion, not only of all mechanical energy, but also of the energy of other angelic substances.

V. *Extent of Angelic Power.*

From the fact that an angel has direct power over the transfer of bodies from one place to another it follows that he can bring about, by that means, a very great number of intrinsic changes, both substantial and accidental. His power in altering the substance or quality or even quantity of material elements is as extensive as the medium through which he works, namely, local movement, allows.

Now there are no limits to the production of substantial and other instrinsic changes taking place through local movement. If the food we absorb is changed into our substance, it is primarily owing to the fact that it is conveyed into our stomachs, and distributed through the various channels of absorption. If we fall ill, the

cause is to be found in the disturbance of that equilibrium which should reign in the various elements of our bodies, our health not returning until that equilibrium is restored. If a seed grows into a tree the reason is that the seed is sown in the earth, and that from it it absorbs that vital fluid which goes to build up its life. If chemical analysis takes place, either in the laboratory of the scientist or the larger laboratory of nature, the ultimate cause is to be found in the union of those simple elements, the combination and interaction of which go to produce those wonderful phenomena with which we are familiar. And so we may infer from the fact that angels can move bodies wherever they wish, that they also possess a mediate power in causing substantial and other intrinsic changes to take place in the universe. The wonders wrought by Pharao's magicians, and recorded in Holy Scripture [1], are ample proof of what we advance.

From all this we may conclude that the phenomena to which the power of angels may give rise, whether exercised mediately or immediately, must be of a remarkable character, both as regards their extent and their diversity. As on the one hand these pure spirits possess a knowledge of physical and chemical laws far surpassing our own knowledge, and as on the other

[1] Exodus vii., viii.

their power is of such vast range, we must assume that there are hardly any phenomena in the world which they cannot produce in one way or another. Indeed, such productions may be so surprising as to have all the appearance of miracles. They are not, however, true miracles, for, though they surpass the powers of the visible universe, so far as it is known to us, they do not, in reality, surpass the power of the angelic nature, a miracle being due to the power of God alone, and surpassing all the powers both of visible and invisible nature, as we shall show hereafter. And yet, even though the angelic power be so great, there is no fear of its perverting the course of nature, seeing that such power has not been given to angels for the destruction, but rather for the good order and regulation of the universe.

If, therefore, at times some of the angelic spirits actually do harm to man, or cause some disorder in the elements of nature, it is either because of an explicit or tacit compact with them, as in the case of witchcraft, or because of some hidden disposition on the part of an all-wise God, who may allow such things to come to pass, as when men, without any actual fault of their own, are tormented by evil spirits.

A brief survey of the phenomena occurring in the physical world will suffice to give an idea of the effects of which angelic beings are capable.

In the first place an angel can, without the co-operation of any intermediate agents, transfer from one place to another even very large bodies; or he can lift them up and keep them suspended in the air for a certain period of time; or he can agitate and bring into collision heavy substances, cause earthquakes and upheavals of the sea, and raise tempests and hurricanes: he can stay the flow of rivers and cause the sea to divide [1].

Again an angel can, by the use of proper means, produce the most wonderful optical effects, either by causing unknown brilliant substances to shed forth floods of light, or by exhibiting shadowy and illusive forms resembling phantasmagorical representations.

He can, without the aid of any instrument, produce the sweetest music and cause strange sounds such as raps or explosions to be heard. He can gather together clouds and cause lightnings and thunderbolts; he can uproot trees and destroy buildings, tear cloth to pieces and break rocks asunder.

He can cause a pencil to write, by itself as it would seem, connected sentences having an in-

[1] Thus far the division of the Red Sea at the striking of Moses' rod did not surpass the natural power of angels; we shall, however, explain hereafter how an angel's operation may, at times, be said to be a true miracle, as indeed the division of the Red Sea must be acknowledged to have been.

telligible meaning, and impart to objects shapes different from those peculiar to their nature; he can, to a certain extent, suspend the functions of life, stopping the breath of the body, or accelerating the circulation of the blood, and he can even cause seeds, planted in the earth, to develop in an extraordinary short time into full grown shrubs with leaves and blossoms and even fruit.

VI. *Whether Angels can assume Living Bodies?*

It has been asked whether it is possible for an angel to form the body of an animal or of a human being, and to assume it in such a way as to perform by its means the ordinary functions of life, such as walking, speaking, eating and the like.

In reply to this question we may say that there is no difficulty in admitting the possibility of such a thing, provided we regard the body thus formed merely as an instrument of which the angel may make use as he pleases, but which does not become part of his nature, as our body is an essential part of our nature.

This follows from what has been said as to an angel's power of transferring material elements from one place to another.

There is, in nature, such an abundant variety of elements, that an angel may well be able, by an artful combination and condensation of these

elements, to impart to them the shape and colour of even a human body. Nay, it is not beyond his power to borrow some of these elements from animals, or even in some cases from living persons, even though they be at a distance from the place where the particular phenomenon is produced.

And, taking into consideration that an angel has a thorough knowledge of each individual person's features, whether living or dead, it is not inconceivable that he may be able, by his own power, so to reproduce the shape, feature, height, colour, and odour, together with the peculiar characteristic arrangements of the clothes, of a particular individual, as to lead those most intimately acquainted with him to mistake the representation for the person himself.

And an angel is capable of producing a yet more wonderful effect. He can cause the body he has thus assumed to walk or move about with perfect ease, to open and shut its eyes, to eat and breathe and utter intelligible sentences, and to accompany these various actions by all those gestures which are peculiar to a real living person [1].

It should, however, be observed that all these actions, which in ordinary living animals and human beings are called vital actions, cannot pro-

[1] The history of Tobias affords a striking evidence of what Catholic Theology teaches.

perly be so called in the case of these phantastical productions, because, although they are performed by the operation of angels as principal agents, yet as the means by which they are performed, i.e. the assumed bodies, are not, as we have already seen, part of their own nature, but are merely external instruments which are moved by them in the same way in which a brush or a chisel are moved by an artist's hand, it follows that those actions cannot be attributed to the bodies from which they seem to emanate and are therefore mechanical and not vital actions.

With regard to the action of eating performed at times by the spirits thus evoked, it should further be observed that this is only apparent and not real, seeing that neither the spirits, being altogether immaterial, can taste any food, nor that the assumed bodies can do so, lacking as they do the essential vital principle. The act of eating, therefore, which the materialized spirits seem to perform consists in nothing but the reduction into minute parts of the food they take and the distribution of it throughout the assumed bodies; and this is precisely what we read of the angel who said to Tobias [1]: "*When I was with you, . . . I indeed appeared to be eating and drinking with you, but I make use of an invisible food and of drink which cannot be seen by men.*"

[1] C. xii. 18, 19.

Hence the act of eating as performed by materialized spirits is not only different from our own eating which is accompanied by nutrition and oftentimes also by an increase of substance, but it also differs from the eating performed by Our Blessed Lord after His resurrection, when in order to prove the reality of His risen body, He really partook of the food which His disciples had prepared, although this food was not necessary to keep Him in life, and thus neither nourished Him, nor caused any increase in His bodily shape.

VII. *The Extent of the Angelic Power over Man.*

Having thus considered the power which angels possess over material elements, we must now inquire what the extent of that power is over man. And, in order to be able to solve this further question, we have to consider man under a two-fold aspect: first, as a being having a body composed of material elements common more or less to all material beings; and secondly, as a creature endowed with sensitive and intellectual powers.

Under the first aspect an angel has the same power over man which he has over, say a stone, a plant, or an animal. He can lift or transfer him to whatever place or distance he may desire [1]. He

[1] See the transfer of Habacuc to Babylon by the angel's power. Dan. xiv. 35.

can also, to some extent, alter his outward form and so modify his internal physical constitution as to produce in him health or sickness or even death. He can, moreover, make use of a man's limbs for purposes of his own, he can move his tongue to speak, his feet to walk, his hand to write. And all these things can be effected by the operation of both good and bad angels.

There is, however, between the action of the former and that of the latter this marked difference. The good angels never act in any such way on man's body, or indeed on any other substance in creation, except by the command of Almighty God, while, in the case of evil spirits, simple permission on God's part is an adequate motive for such action. God's command is always ordained to a good end, not only as regards His own will and intention, but also as regards the agency by means of which it is executed. God's permission, on the other hand, in itself good and ordained to good, implies in the agent that executes it, a sense of abuse and of moral culpability. And, whereas a good angel is like an instrument in God's hand, an evil angel, on the contrary, acting for his own perverted end, claims a personal responsibility in the work he has effected; from which it follows that, while those visible productions with which we are here concerned are miracles in the case of good angels, they are but mere

imposture and evil-doing in the case of evil spirits. We shall, however, return to this subject later on.

It is when the evil angels are allowed to exercise their power to a fuller extent over a man's body, so as to sway and dominate it, that that phenomenon takes place which is termed possession or obsession, the individuals who fall under such evil influence being called energumens. We have many instances of this cruel tyranny exercised over man by evil spirits, not only in the Sacred Scriptures, but also in the records of history, both sacred and profane.

We have thus far spoken of the extent of an angel's power over man when considered merely as a material being.

It is much more difficult to ascertain how far man as man, i.e. as a rational being endowed with a sensitive nature and the power of understanding and of will, may become subject to angelic influence. What is the extent of this influence? Can man's senses be moved and modified by these spiritual intelligences? Can he be made to understand and to will what the angel may want him to understand and to will?

Let us in the first place consider the senses. We have to distinguish between the internal senses such as the imagination and the sensitive memory, and the external senses such as sight, taste, and the like. Now an angel can act upon

us directly with regard to both these sources of sensitive knowledge and, since these internal and external senses are common to animals as well as to men (except that in us these faculties are intimately connected with and ordained to the intellect, which is not the case with animals), he can thus act upon animals also.

This is due to the fact that our nerves, being material elements, are subject, as regards local motion, to the immediate action of angelic beings, while the sensitive perceptions of our internal and external organs again depend on the peculiar motion of that vital and most subtle nervous system.

There can be no doubt that the peculiar disposition of our body as regards nerves, muscles, blood, spleen, and the like, is under the influence of natural agents such as light, heat and so forth, these being the essential condition of those processes of the imagination which either keep our brains busy during sleep, or engross our attention while awake. And the angelic beings, having a perfect knowledge of the elements of our bodies, can make them work together in such a manner as to artificially produce in us phantasms similar to those produced naturally.

The peculiar disposition of our external organs, moreover, may also be the cause of certain sensations. A weakening of the optic nerve, for instance,

may cause in us amblyopia or even amaurosis; a modification of the retina may prevent a man from distinguishing colours (as in the case of those affected with daltonism), and to a feverish tongue everything may taste bitter. All such modifications an angel can cause in our external and internal organs by the exercise of his own natural powers, and we can easily imagine how deeply our sensitive nature can thus be impressed, and how far-reaching such modifications introduced into our nervous system may be.

The only limit to this power is the creation, in our imagination, of the phantasm of an object placed beyond the reach of our external senses, the latter being the natural sources from which the phantasms of the imagination originate. No angelic power, therefore, is capable of imparting to a man born blind the conception of colour, of conveying to a deaf man an accurate notion of sound, or of making a person imagine an object which he has never seen or heard of before. All an angel can do is to lead the mind, by an ingenious combination of phantasms previously obtained, to imagine what it could not learn by other means, such as experience, or study, or the teaching of others.

Thus it is not beyond the power of an angel to act so vividly on the imagination as to persuade a person that he has actually been transferred to a

distant place and is conversing with persons out of sight, or to cause him to describe with exactness the topography of a particular place or the peculiarities of a particular person.

From all this we may easily infer, then, how very wide an angel's field of action is where man's sensitive nature is concerned. Science has not yet spoken its last word on the subject of our physiological possibilities, but the minute construction and working of our organs of sense and imagination are so perfectly known to the angelic substances, that we can hardly conceive to what an extent they may be capable of exercising their activity within the sphere of our animal nature.

But the further question to which we shall now have to address ourselves has reference to the manner in which angels can influence our intellect and will.

There can be no doubt that an angel can illuminate our intellects: not indeed by simply addressing himself to our minds in the same way in which one angel illuminates another (for the human intellect cannot perceive truth except through the medium of sensible images), but by suggesting to us what he wishes us to know under the likeness of those sensible images which it is in his power to form, either in the sphere of our external senses or in that of the imagination. And this he accomplishes by bringing into opera-

tion the latent energies of our nervous system, ordained and subservient to mental operations.

But, although an angel can thus illuminate our mind, he cannot act upon our will in such a way as to infallibly induce it to obey his bidding. This is a power which belongs to God only, Who is the author of our rational nature, and Who is therefore the primary Cause of that inclination which flows from our rational nature and which is nothing else but our will. God then, being the Author of this inclination, can certainly move it effectually and He can do so in the most gentle and quiet manner imaginable.

All the angelic spirit can do to move our will is confined to external influence. He can suggest to us the object he desires us to embrace, presenting it in such an alluring form as to entice us to strive after its possession. Besides that since, as experience teaches, our passions are very powerful in moving our rational will, and, on the other hand, our sensitive nature is in its motions somewhat subject to the influence of spiritual agencies, it follows that an angel can also move our will by exciting in us violent emotions such as love, hatred, anger, and the like, which have their seat in some determinate organ of the body. But in such cases it always remains in our power to resist the angel's influence, whether this influence be exercised for a good purpose or for an evil one.

From all this it follows that if there be pure spirits maliciously inclined towards mankind, they do not lack the means of harming us, so that our position with regard to them is anything but a safe one. The Apostle St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, expresses this as follows[1]:—"*For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.*"

But, thanks be to the mercy of God, if there be spirits who lie in wait for us, others there are, and their power is not inferior to the power of the evil spirits, who are bent upon protecting us and benefiting us in every manner; for again it is written[2]:—"*For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*"

VIII. *Limits of Angelic Power.*

Although the power possessed by angels over the elements of the world is, as we have seen, of such wide range, it is nevertheless restricted to certain limits:—a subject which must now engage our attention.

Angels cannot, in the first place, alter the

[1] Eph. vi. 12. [2] Psalm xc. 11, 12.

general order of nature.[1] They cannot produce such effects as, let us say, the prolongation of the natural day—a thing which is recorded as having taken place at the command of Josue[1]; neither can they effect an alteration in the essential properties of things, as was the case when the bush in which the Lord appeared to Moses, though on fire, was not burnt[2]. Such works as these Catholic Theology acknowledges to be miracles of the first order, or miracles *quoad substantiam facti*, which are effects entirely surpassing the powers of nature.

It is likewise beyond the power of angelic substances to restore a dead body to life or to give sight to a man born blind. Supernatural operations of this kind belong to the order of miracles of the second class, called by theologians *quoad subjectum* and comprehending works which are not beyond the power of nature to produce, but which nature never produces except in particular subjects naturally disposed to receive life or sight. Nature indeed gives life, but not to a corpse; it gives sight, but not to a blind man.

There is yet another class of miraculous operations which theologians call miracles *quoad modum*. These surpass the forces of nature in so far as the effect is brought about in a way different

[1] Jos. x. 13. [2] Exodus iii. 2.

from its ordinary course. Thus the instantaneous cessation of a fever without the aid of physic, or the sudden fall of rain, must be reckoned above the forces of nature and yet are not so as regards the substance of the works performed nor the subjects in which they take place, but only as regards the order and manner of their production. Now it is precisely in the production of such effects that the power of angelic substances can display itself, so that we may say that angels can, by their own energy, cause works corresponding to miracles of the third order to take place in the universe.

But does it follow from this that, in such productions, angels always work true miracles? No; it is only when they act as God's ministers that their works are miraculous and supernatural; when, on the other hand, they act of their own accord, such works are preternatural only.

The reason for this distinction lies in the fact that when angels act in this visible world under God's commands as His ministers, their object falls in with God's purpose and such action is ordained to an end surpassing the whole order of creation. In this case their action is one, as it were, with God's action and consequently has the nature of a true miracle. When angels, on the other hand, act of their own accord, the effect does not surpass the natural order and, however

wonderful it may be, it cannot be called a miracle in the true sense of the word.

Hence it may be that the same effect produced by different angels, such as the healing of a sick man from fever, may in one case be a miracle and in another no miracle at all. It is a miracle when produced at God's command by the angel acting as God's minister: it is no miracle when produced by the angel of his own accord.

What we have said thus far has reference to the natural power of angels considered in themselves without any reference to their degree of morality. Now there are, as will be seen hereafter, two distinct classes of angels—the good and the bad. But as the good angels never display their power in this material world except at God's bidding, it follows that all their visible interventions are miracles, while, on the other hand, the interventions of the evil angels, except (and this is sometimes the case) when they are compelled to act in this visible world as the ministers of God's justice, are no miracles at all.

IX. *The Compenetration of Bodies.*

In connection with the aforesaid consideration we may here propose the question whether it is possible for an angel to bring about the phenomenon known as the compenetration of bodies: that is, the causing two bodies to occupy

the same space at the same time. That this phenomenon can take place through divine power cannot be doubted, since we read in Holy Scripture that our Lord entered the room in which His disciples were gathered together while the doors were shut[1].

Now it would seem that the same phenomenon can also be induced at *séances* through spiritistic practices, objects being occasionally extracted from closed caskets or boxes, without suffering any kind of injury. We may say at once, however, that, whatever view we may take as to the reality of this phenomenon, it is wholly beyond an angel's power to cause two bodies to occupy exactly the very same place or space at the same time. And this is evident from the nature of space considered in its relation to the individuality of bodies, i.e. the distinction of one body from another. In order that two bodies may occupy the same space at the same time two conditions have to be fulfilled: (1) one of the two bodies must be present without its proper outward dimensions, and (2) this body must nevertheless remain distinct from the other body in such a way as not to be confounded with it.

It is the natural property of bodies to possess certain outward dimensions, that is, to occupy a certain space exactly corresponding with their

[1] John xx. 19.

outlines, this precise contact of the outline of bodies with the dimensions of the space occupied constituting the natural and ordinary distinction of one body from another.

The question, therefore, which presents itself is: how can the dimensions of one body be so suspended as to allow it to fill the space occupied by another? And further, how can the distinction between these two bodies continue to exist notwithstanding the absence of relation in one of these bodies with those dimensions of space which it should occupy? In other words we may say that the possibility of two distinct bodies occupying at the same time one and the same space depends first on the suspension in one of them of the natural property of its quantity (which is the adjusting of the dimensions of space to its own dimensions); and secondly, on the continuation of a real distinction of this body from any other body whatever.

Hence it follows that, in order that two distinct bodies may actually be in one and the same place, it is necessary, in the first place, that in one of these two bodies the outward effect proper to quantity (which is that of exactly corresponding to the dimensions of a fixed space) should be suspended. This means that, whilst the outward dimensions of one of those two bodies correspond exactly with the space it occupies, and consequently so

fill that space as to exclude any other body whatever from being there present in the same way, that is, with its own proper dimensions, the second body, on the contrary, is not in that place by a direct relation of its dimensions to the dimensions of space, but by its substance, the outward effect of its dimensions being actually suspended. Furthermore, the simultaneous presence of two bodies in one space demands that the distinctive principle of one body from another, which principle in the ordinary course follows immediately on the relation of the external dimensions of quantity to the corresponding dimensions of space, be supplied from elsewhere, that is, by the efficiency of an agent who may be able to produce the effects of secondary causes without these.

Now both these effects can be produced by God alone; for, in the first place, to suspend the natural properties of things created lies altogether beyond the natural power of any creature whatever, and belongs to Him only, on Whom all things depend, Who, by His creative act, has not only produced out of nothing the different things of this world, but who has also endowed them with their respective properties. Again, the power to produce the effects of secondary causes without these belongs to God alone, Whose efficiency embraces virtually whatever

efficiency secondary causes may be imagined to possess.

None but God, therefore, is able to produce the phenomenon known as the compenetration of bodies, which is classed among miracles of the first order, because He alone can both suspend the natural relation of one of the two bodies to the corresponding dimensions of space, and at the same time supplement the consequence of that relation, which is the distinction of one body from the other, by keeping the one actually distinct from the other in virtue of His infinite power.

Angels, whatever their rank, have no such power, as they are unable to suspend the natural properties of bodies or to supply their efficiency; all they can do is to make use of the properties inherent in the elements of matter which they perfectly know and, by ingenious contrivances, to obtain such effects as might otherwise be obtained, that is, in other circumstances.

But, although it is beyond the angel's power to cause two bodies to be at the same time in the same place, yet an angel can, by his own power, so reduce into minutest particles even the hardest metallic bodies, as to make them pass in this way through exceedingly small apertures; and as he can reconstruct that body according to its original shape, and this in a very short time

and with the greatest accuracy, we may easily understand how he can, to some extent, produce such wonderful phenomena in this line of operation as to make it appear that, through his agency, matter is actually compenetrating matter.

We may here, for clearness' sake, add one more observation.

We have said that an angel cannot alter the natural properties of things. Thus an angel cannot take away from fire the property of burning, from the particles of water the property of attracting each other. This God alone can do, Who is the author of nature and of its single properties. But how is it, it will be asked, that angels can, for instance, prevent water from flowing, or suspend bodies in the air ?

This angels do, not by taking away from water its property of fluidity, or from bodies in general their mutual power of attraction, as is the case when God produces those effects, but by some artificial contrivance of their own, for which they make use of the elements of matter. Thus, by an exercise of their power, they can stay the flow of water just as we, by mechanical means, can cause water to rise upwards.

This last observation, however, does not affect the case we have first contemplated, namely, that of the compenetration of bodies, which is a

different thing altogether. In order that two bodies may be together in the same place it is, as we have said, necessary that the external dimensions of quantity should actually be suspended and that, at the same time, the proper effect of those dimensions, distinguishing one body from another, should be supplied in another way. Now this can be done by God alone. And thus it becomes clear that none but God can cause the phenomenon of the compenetration of bodies.

X. *The Spiritistic Phenomena may be accounted for by Angelic Agency.*

We have seen what, according to Catholic teaching, is the extent of the power which the angels possess over the elements of this world and over man's sensitive and intellectual nature. This power is of an exceedingly wide range, and so greatly surpasses all that we know of the power possessed by physical agents that a thorough acquaintance with these physical agents is not sufficient to give us an exact idea of how far-reaching the angelic power is; as, in similar fashion, a knowledge of our own intellectual faculties is insufficient to afford us a complete survey of the mental capacities of these wonderful spirits. The only way for us to obtain an accurate notion

of the knowledge and power proper to angels is resort to Catholic Theology.

Now, if any unprejudiced mind will take the trouble to examine, one by one, all the phenomena which either do actually occur, or which have at any time occurred in spiritistic *séances* through the agency of recognized mediums, we have no doubt but that it will be readily acknowledged that there is not one of them, whether of a mechanical, physiological, or intellectual nature, which cannot be attributed to one or other of the various forms of angelic knowledge and power described above.

The apparently spontaneous production of light, heat, and sound, the removal of objects from one place to another, the presentation of phantastic images, the automatic formation of articulate speech and of intelligible writing, the rapid production of living plants and even the framing of human bodies, with all the appearance of life and movement, the manifestation of occult and distant events and, to some extent, the infusion into the medium of unknown tongues and sciences—these and many other similar phenomena do not exceed the capacity of angelic spirits, whether good or evil, and to them these effects may safely be attributed as an adequate cause.

So also is there nothing surpassing the extent of angelic knowledge and power in the intellectual

intercourse carried on between friends placed at a great distance from each other; in the disclosure, on the part of mediums, of the proper causes of and remedies for various kinds of sickness; in the execution of a determinate plan, previously suggested, at a fixed time and place and in an order and with circumstances minutely arranged beforehand; or in the prediction of events depending upon material causes such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions, which may perhaps be unknown to us but are perfectly known to angels.

To angelic efficiency may likewise be attributed a great variety of phenomena of a pathological order, which natural medicine is at times unable to redress.

Thus it is within the angel's power to cause partial or even total paralysis, aphasia or the inability to utter articulate speech or even distinct syllables, unconsciousness, amnesia or the loss of memory, general or local ataxy and such like disorders.

Now, while evil angels may bring about all these effects, they may also, by ceasing their maleficent influence, restore to perfect health a person suffering from such disorders, even suggesting opportune remedies, and thus, by the simulation of a true miracle, bring about what appears to be a perfect cure.

Tertullian[1] already, speaking of the craftiness of demons, observed how, in order to induce men to believe in their miraculous healing power, these evil spirits begin by injuring their health, in order to thus call attention to their restoring power, which they exercise, either by ceasing their malignant influence or by suggesting remedies apt to repair the evils which they have themselves caused.

Now, whether the effects above mentioned, as manifested in spiritistic *séances*, not only *may* but *must* be attributed to angels, and indeed to fallen angels, that is to say to angels of a low moral order whom we call demons, will be seen from the inquiry upon which we propose to enter in the following chapter.

We shall then proceed to examine the nature, knowledge, and power of the human soul when separated by death from the body; for it is to the souls of the dead that modern spiritism is wont to ascribe these various phenomena and manifestations.

[1] "Apologet." Chapter xxii.

CHAPTER II

The Human Soul after Death

As already pointed out, a large number of modern scientists, relying on the declarations repeatedly elicited at *séances* that the authors of the spiritistic phenomena are none other than the souls of human beings separated by death from the body, are increasingly coming to the conclusion that this must in reality be so, and that these souls must be supposed to have acquired, in their new state, stores of knowledge and of power which they could not have possessed in this present life.

It may not be without interest to note that the view that we can naturally come into communication with the spirits of the dead, was entertained long before spiritism took its present form. Even before the coming of Christ this view was rather widely received, and the first Christian emperors had to enact severe laws in order to check the tendency of converts from paganism to have

recourse to these practices. Their efforts were seconded by several councils, but they do not appear to have been very successful as, in the middle ages, these practices seem to have extended far and wide. The famous Constitution of Sixtus V. "*Cœli et terræ Creator*"[1] against conjurors in general and necromancers in particular, is a proof that at the end of the sixteenth century the custom of seeking intercourse with the souls of the dead was anything but declining.

Now, in order to determine whether the phenomena of spiritism may, in some way or other, be attributed to the souls of the dead, it is necessary to explain, according to sound principles of philosophy, first, what the state of the soul, separated by death from the body, is; secondly, what the knowledge is which it may be said to possess; thirdly, what is the extent of its power.

But as it is impossible to arrive at any conclusion as to the knowledge of the human soul after death without inquiring what that knowledge is in this life, we shall incidentally explain to the reader the teaching of Catholic philosophy on this point.

[1] January 5th, 1585.

SECTION I

THE STATE OF THE SOUL SEPARATED FROM THE BODY [1]

Although the human soul is destined, by reason of its nature, to be united to an organic body, yet is it in itself absolutely devoid of all matter. It is an immaterial substance akin to angels, and would be called a pure spirit, but for the relation it has with the body.

Its union with the latter is so close and intimate that to admit between the two the presence of any

[1] The proper way of designating the human soul after death is to say that it is *separated from the body*. The expression *disembodied soul* seems to imply that our soul is not substantially united to the body during life, but only in the manner in which a garment is joined to the person it covers. The expression *discarnate soul* conveys the idea that our soul existed before it was united to our body in the unity of person, as is the case in the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the second person of the Blessed Trinity, eternal in itself, was in time united personally to a human nature.

If, in the course of the present argument, we make use of either of these expressions, it will only be with a view of facilitating the understanding of the Catholic doctrine, and without any reference to the meanings we have just indicated and which the Catholic Church rejects. As a matter of fact the Church asserts that the soul is the *substantial form of the body*. Likewise, when using the word *phenomena*, we do not intend to deny, in the occurrences alluded to, their objective reality, as some philosophers have held.

veil, however ethereal, would mean the rejection of the teaching of Catholic psychology on the union of soul and body in the present life. Their respective boundaries are not traceable by any line of demarcation, and the traditional teaching of the Church has discountenanced, as opposed to the soul's spirituality, anything like an envelope or perispirit containing the soul and exhibiting as it were its outlines. For, if this perispirit called by some *astral body*, be intrinsic to the soul, it is part of the same and the soul is as a consequence material; if it is only an outward involucrum, it again supposes the soul to be material, for a truly spiritual being transcends all matter and cannot be contained by a body however subtle this may be. In either case we have the destruction of that formal union between soul and body which is taught by Catholic philosophy.

But we must now examine what is the natural state of this spiritual substance, that is, of our soul after it has departed the body, that so we may pave the way to an understanding of the knowledge and power it then naturally possesses. It would, however, be of no use endeavouring to find out what the condition of the disembodied souls of men is, unless their existence, and the manner in which they survive the body, be first ascertained.

It will therefore be necessary, before speaking of the knowledge and power belonging to the

separated human soul, not only to lay down the fact of its survival after death, but also to explain the sense in which it may be said that the human personality continues then to subsist. The theory also of an unconscious subliminal self, invented by modern spiritists, will have to be examined, as well as the old theory of metempsychosis, otherwise called reincarnation, which is still accepted by some as a probable hypothesis.

I. *Survival of the Human Soul after Death.*

The survival of the human soul after death is not only a tenet of Catholic Theology, but it is also a truth generally admitted by philosophers both ancient and modern. Materialists are an exception to the universal acceptation of this truth, but their dissent, if not prompted by private interest, must be pronounced to originate in their ignorance of the spiritual nature of the human soul in relation to corruption and death.

Given a substance which has a spiritual action proper to itself, that is an action not depending intrinsically on compound matter, such a substance must itself be spiritual, that is not composed of matter nor depending on matter, for an operation cannot be more perfect than the principle from which it emanates. Now the human soul has a spiritual operation proper to itself, which is understanding and willing, which does not intrinsically

depend on compound matter. Consequently it cannot itself be composed of matter or depending on matter. Now what is death, but a dissolution of the elements which come together to compose a whole, a corruption of the essence of that whole? And how can a being that is spiritual and therefore has no part be subjected to dissolution and corruption?

It may be objected that the souls of animals, being the life-giving element, are also simple substances, and therefore have no parts and yet are subject to corruption. But it should be observed that the souls of animals are not spiritual, being devoid of a spiritual operation proper to themselves, that is of understanding and willing. Hence those souls do not subsist by themselves, but have to depend entirely upon the body whose operations they share, and therefore they must vanish away as the body falls into corruption. But this is not the case with the human soul, the operations of which show that it is not only simple in its essence, but also of a spiritual nature, that is to say that it subsists by itself and therefore cannot share the death of the body.

But how can the materialist himself account for that natural craving after an unending life, which every man feels in his inmost heart? Surely the voice of nature cannot speak falsely.

At any rate, the partisans of the spiritualistic theory are with us in this respect, so that the only difference between us and them is as to the *way* in which the soul exists after death, and the *manner* in which it can exercise its intelligent and active power. The whole difference between the spiritistic and Catholic theories lies in the different conception of the state of the human soul after death.

It should be observed here that we are speaking in this connection of the state of the human soul after death, quite apart from what the Catholic Church teaches concerning its final destiny.

It is of faith that after death the souls of those who have done evil in this life are immediately condemned to eternal punishment, whereas the souls of those who have done well are admitted, either at once or after a certain period of purgation, to the vision of the Divine Essence in heaven. This vision, besides filling the soul with happiness, enables it to see with perfect clearness, in that ocean of infinite light, all that it may desire to see. But this vision does not make void the natural knowledge of the soul, which may be regarded as a common possession of the good in heaven, and of the bad condemned to eternal punishment.

It is of this natural knowledge, and of what may be called the natural state of the soul, apart

from the question of its final destiny, that we intend now to speak.

II. *How the Human Personality subsists after Death.*

But before we inquire into the nature of the knowledge and power which the human soul naturally possesses after death, it is necessary to state how the human individuality or personality can be said to preserve its identity after death, for what we are here about to say presupposes the substantial identity of our personality in life and after death, and could never fit in with a system, however elaborate it may seem, which teaches the absorption, after death, of each individual personality into one great whole as is the case with the Nirvâna of Bouddha, or the ascension of the discarnate soul towards a substantially different state as repeatedly asserted in spiritistic circles.

Perhaps there is no notion that is more common among men, and yet more difficult to define, than that of individuality or personality. As a matter of fact these two words mean the same thing. When we speak of man, however, the word personality is more fitly employed than the word individuality, which latter word is used in connection with lower forms of life or even with inorganic beings. As we are here dealing with the higher form of life, viz. intellectual life, it is

the term personality that we propose to employ, and of which we shall now endeavour to give an exact notion, with the object of showing how human personality can be said to exist substantially identical after death, though somewhat modified.

The common meaning conveyed by the word personality is that of a complete being which so subsists by itself, as to be distinct from all other beings. It is what we mean when we employ the pronouns *I*, *Thou*, *He*. These words are used to designate the complete and distinct being of the particular individual to which they refer. Our personality, then, during the present life, comprehends not only the soul, but also the body, that is that *one being* which is neither soul nor body but a compound of both. This is the reason why actions of both body and soul are attributed not to the body only nor to the soul only, but to that *Ego* which answers for both, because it is a compound of both.

Now if our personality comprehends both body and soul how can it be said to subsist after death? The body exists no longer, at least as a human body united to the soul, and yet there remains a sort of personality, for even then the Ego continues to subsist, to think, to will and to answer to another's call. However, it cannot be denied that the personality is then somewhat changed.

There is a kind of deficiency in the Ego. If the Ego be composed of body and soul, the absence of the body has in some way impaired its entirety; in other words man as man subsists no longer, because the soul which now alone subsists, is not man.

This truth will be more evident from a recognition of the difference which exists between the human soul and the angelic substance. It is the nature of an angel to be not only free from matter, but even from all substantial union with matter: while the human soul, though immaterial, has a necessary relation to flesh and blood, that is to say, to a determinate human body. Its very nature, its very essence is, not indeed to be actually united to the body, since it can exist separated from it, but to be ordained to union with it. It is a substance unique in its kind, which cannot come into existence unless it be received into a body, and which has not the perfection of its nature when it is actually separated from it. Hence the Ego of the angel never undergoes any change, whereas the Ego of man is, when death strikes its blow, somewhat modified.

The natural relation of each soul to its own body is the precise cause of the difference of one soul from another: it gives, as it were, to each distinct soul its characteristic mark, so that each soul can be said to bear upon itself, in some way,

the impress of the body, although it be nobler than the body, and the body dependent on the soul, not the soul on the body. This is the reason why, in the present state of life, we understand nothing except with the concurrence of phantasms or sensible images, although thought is widely different from and far surpasses phantasm or imagination, whereas the angelic beings do not need sensitive images or the phantasms of the material things in their operations.

This being the case, the human personality must be said to be somewhat maimed after death when the body is no more. Hence, however happy we may imagine a discarnate soul to be, yet as it has not the perfection of its nature, its happiness and contentment cannot be complete, since it retains a certain craving after its own body. This craving cannot be satisfied, except by the resurrection of the flesh.

From all this, two conclusions naturally follow :—

The first is that it is impossible to admit the existence, beyond our conscious human personality, of a second personality, contained in the first and inferior to it in degree, seeing that the very nature of our personality demands that, while it should in itself be indistinct, it should, at the same time, be distinct from everything else. It is impossible that there should be two personalities

or two selves in one man or in one individual, whatever this second personality may be said to be. My own personality then precludes, as is evident, the possibility of another Ego, distinct from the present one: of an Ego which would be the duplicate of my Ego, as though within my personality a second personality were included which had the power of unfolding itself from the personality of which I am conscious, in whatever manner this unfolding may be conceived.

The second conclusion is that the personality which survives the body, although it be somewhat altered, that is to say, with regard to the body which by death is destroyed, is still substantially the same as during life. That same Ego, which now bears witness to the identity of my personality in life, will be the very same Ego which will subsist after death. As the presence of another Ego, besides my conscious Ego, would imply the destruction of the latter, so, after death, another Ego could not succeed the present Ego without this present one being discontinued.

It must then be laid down as a fundamental truth, both that there are not two personalities in one individual during life, and that after death that same conscious personality of the earth-life subsists identically the same, except for the absence of the body. There is in each man but one self, and this self endures for ever.

III. *The Impossibility of Dividing the Human Personality.*

The aforesaid doctrine will now have to be applied to that modern hypothesis which claims that there exists within our human personality another or inferior personality—a second and unconscious self—which is to be conceived of as a kind of reproduction of the first self with some accidental modification, such as the absence of consciousness, and which lies hidden, ready for occasional manifestation, under peculiar abnormal mental and physical conditions.

It is urged that evidence for this is to be found in cases of bi-location, frequently referred to in the lives of the Saints.

But we must observe in the first place, that the phenomenon of bi-location occurs but very rarely in ecclesiastical history, and that when it occurs, it is only in cases of persons endowed with extraordinary sanctity, and for some very special and important purpose. These cases, moreover, of bi-location do not entail, according to Catholic Theology, the presence of the same body existing locally in two different places, even though this body should be imagined to exist in one place to the full extent of its material qualities, and in the other only in a lesser degree. For it is impossible, even for God's power, to cause one and the same

body to occupy locally two different places, since this would involve a manifest contradiction. A body, already *fully* contained by the place it occupies, cannot at the same time be measured and contained by a place different from it.

Neither does the fact that the body of Christ, in the Eucharist, is present not in two but in many places, that is, in as many places as there are consecrated hosts, afford a valid objection to our statement. Christ is not in the Sacrament in a local manner as are bodies which are contained and measured by the place they occupy, but He is there sacramentally, that is to say, not by a commensuration of his outward dimensions to the dimensions of the place where the sacrament is, but immediately by His own invisible substance hidden under the sacramental species.

The subliminal self, on the contrary, would, according to the very conditions of the case, be present in a determinate place by its own dimensions corresponding with the dimensions of the place in which it is, and so would be there locally.

But what kind of phenomenon, it will be asked, is that which is presented by the bi-locations recorded in the annals of the Church ?

These bi-locations are nothing more than the reproduction, by angelic agency, and in the way described above (that is, by the aid of highly subtle material elements), of a person's body, of

his height, features and his other accidental properties, in such a manner as to give it the appearance of that person's second self. Why then could not the "subliminal self" be the issue of a similar process instead of being, as it is claimed by spiritists, a direct emanation of the person whom it represents? It may be confidently asserted that the production of this double is wholly due to the immediate action of some pure spirits who can, from the elements of matter, and even from a particular portion of the substance of some human individuals, shape a figure representing the particular person's features, gait, speech and characteristic mode of action. This, as we have shown above, is not beyond the power naturally pertaining to angelic substances.

The hypothesis, then, of a second unconscious or subconscious self, distinct from our own conscious personality and by modern scientists said to be responsible for those extraordinary manifestations produced by certain persons through suggestion and other occult practices, cannot be admitted, it being directly contrary to what Catholic Theology teaches as to the essential oneness of the human personality.

It may be assumed that this subconscious self, whatever may be said of it during the present life, will surely exist after death, as a manifestation, in a lower degree, of our soul's own substance.

This, however, is even more opposed to Catholic teaching than is the hypothesis of a subconscious self existing in us in the present life. For, as human personality is after death represented by the soul alone, the idea of the latter possessing the power of unfolding a second self distinct from the soul's self, would surely be equivalent to denying its simplicity and spirituality, more especially as the manifestations for the sake of which that subconscious self is postulated are of a visible character, and our soul is essentially invisible.

But whence does the view that human personality can be divided arise? It arises from the fact that our personality is considered to be identical with consciousness, as though the essence of our personality were consciousness itself.

If this were the case our personality would indeed change in our sleep, and a man, through some accident or other losing his memory, and having to commence his education over again, as has sometimes been the case, would thereby acquire a new personality.

But an observation will be sufficient to prove how false is the identification of personality with consciousness. Supposing the man of whom we speak to have in the course of his life deserved well of his country, any recompense that might be given him in his after-life would fail to be a true reward, the recipient of it being an entirely

different being from the one to whom the reward is due. Again, in the case of a man who, previous to the loss of his consciousness, had led a criminal life, any subsequent penance on his part would fail to blot out his fault; moreover any punishment that might be inflicted on him would be sheer injustice, as it would fall on an entirely innocent head.

The error, then, lies in the circumstance that we are apt to mistake that state of unconsciousness into which we occasionally fall, even whilst waking, for a really subsisting self, lurking in our inner personality and different from it. Such an accidental modification, however, cannot be sufficient to constitute a really subsisting being distinct from our own self.

As regards the existence of a subconscious self after death, we may add that such a hypothesis is irreconcilable with the fact that our soul will then no longer be liable to lose its own consciousness, as it will no longer be prevented from contemplating itself and its own actions by the senses or by any external object.

The hypothesis therefore commonly known under the name of *dédoublement* of spirits, by which some endeavour to explain the phenomena of suggestion and also of materialization, and generally all those phenomena in which another personality, different from that commonly appearing,

seems to be at work, must be abandoned as contrary to the intrinsic nature of our personality.

IV. *Metempsychosis.*

Not only is the hypothesis of the divisibility of the human personality, either during life or after death, philosophically inadmissible, but the belief that the human soul is capable in either condition of informing or animating a body other than that which it informed or animated from the beginning, must also be rejected.

The theory of metempsychosis, which is but a travesty of the natural faith of mankind in the immortality of the soul, has been the foundation upon which the poets of old have built up a good deal of their fiction. The transmigration of souls from one body to another, which has found acceptance with some scientists of the present day, is but a revival of the old doctrine known as the circuitous travel of spirits. The reincarnation taught by Allan Kardec[1] is nothing but the metempsychosis of Bouddha, with this difference, that while Bouddha admits the transmigration of the human soul into the bodies of beasts, Allan Kardec holds to its reincarnation in other human bodies only.

[1] The true name of Allan Kardec, who is considered by many to be the founder of modern Spiritism, is Léon Hippolyte Denizard Rivail.

But there is no reason for this limitation, as there is no impediment to an animal body receiving a human soul if we admit the soul to have in life no essential or necessary relation to its own body. Carried to its ultimate conclusion the doctrine of metempsychosis leads to this ludicrous consequence, that we should have to abstain from eating the flesh of animals lest we should be exposing ourselves to the danger of feeding upon what may be considered to have been the substance of our own relatives.

Now the Catholic Church has always repudiated such a belief, not only as contrary to the voice of conscience, but especially as opposed to what we know of the very nature of the soul.

As already pointed out, our souls are distinct from angelic substances in that they have a marked relation to their organized bodies, not indeed to *any* kind of organic bodies, but to those bodies into which they are respectively infused at the very moment of their creation. This relation so distinguishes and, as it were, characterizes the essence of the human soul, that as it is impossible for it during the present life to migrate from one body to another, so it is equally impossible for it, after this life, to animate or inform any other body, whether of an equal or of a lower form of life. The only thing that might possibly occur is that the soul should again be made to animate

and inform the body which it had during life and towards which, although now in the grave, it has never ceased to retain a kind of inclination. This possibility, however, lies beyond the sphere of natural agency and can come to pass only by the divine will and power. The fact of the resurrection of the dead in the very same flesh which they had during life, is a miracle of divine omnipotence and one of the principal tenets of our holy Faith.

Having thus briefly recalled to mind the Catholic teaching as to the nature of the soul in life and after death, we must now pass on to explain —first, what degree of knowledge, and secondly, what degree of power, the soul may be said to possess after death. A clear understanding of these two points will be found to be of the utmost importance for a complete investigation into the real causes of spiritistic manifestations.

But to determine with any degree of accuracy what the nature and extent of the knowledge and of the power proper to disembodied souls are, will be no easy matter. It is the abundant light which Catholic philosophy has shed on this abstruse subject that can alone be a sure guide for us in our research.

SECTION II

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEPARTED HUMAN SOUL

It has been shown that the spirituality of the human soul is the reason of man's personality surviving the death of the body, that is, in a somewhat changed condition. But if this be so, the soul that represents that personality must be capable of knowledge and of action. What, then, we must inquire, is the nature of this knowledge which appertains to the soul separated from the body?

In order to answer this question we must first briefly explain the way in which we arrive at the knowledge of truth in this present life. Such an explanation will enable us to understand the difference which exists between the mode of reaching knowledge in this life and that of attaining it in the next, and will help us to establish a comparison between the kind of knowledge which belongs to the soul after death, and the knowledge which we naturally possess during life.

This subject requires very special examination, as it is from this quarter that we are likely to obtain most help in ascertaining the true causes to which the spiritistic manifestations are to be attributed. If we would determine, for instance, whether such a phenomenon as the imparting of

special knowledge, in a manner different from that in ordinary use during life, may be attributed to the souls of the dead, it is necessary that we should first understand what particular objects the souls of the dead can know in that new state, and also whether it be possible for them to place themselves in communication with us. To decide this latter point, it will be necessary to inquire, in the first place, whether and how departed souls can converse with each other, and how we can, in the present life, enter into communication with our fellow-men—an inquiry which will lead us to consider the modern phenomenon of telepathy.

This will give us a further opportunity of examining the theory of the second or subconscious self, already referred to, and also that of mental vibrations (which again is closely connected with the theory of fluidic magnetic emanations from the human body), by which theories certain scientists are seeking to explain a series of recently observed mental phenomena of a most extraordinary character [1].

Having settled these preliminary matters, we

[1] We need only recall to mind here the theory of Reichenbach, attributing to a most subtle substance, named by him Od, and supposed to be endowed with particularly sensitive qualities, the power of placing us in direct mental communication with our fellow-men.

shall be able to discuss the main points at issue: Whether the departed human soul can manifest its thoughts to us and, *vice versâ*, whether we can manifest our thoughts to a departed soul. And the result of our inquiry will constitute the answer to our original question, which of the two is to be held responsible for the manifestations under consideration: the souls of the dead, or angelic spirits?

We must here again make the observation which we have already made above, when speaking of the knowledge proper to angelic substances, viz. that we are now considering the human soul after death according to the light of reason only, and not according to the light of faith: that is, we intend to speak of its natural knowledge, and not of that supernatural knowledge which only the souls of the blessed possess in the vision of the Divine Essence. This knowledge ennobles the soul far above all that we can imagine; but as this consideration lies outside the scope of the present work, we do not propose to enter upon it here.

I. *How Knowledge can be obtained in the Present Life.*

The soul being essentially destined to inform the body and to be one complete nature with it, it is in the very nature of things that it should

make use of the senses of the body to acquire knowledge, whatever we may imagine this knowledge to be. Hence it is that an infant's soul is but a blank sheet of paper, and that it is only in the course of years, when its sensitive faculties are developed, that truth begins to dawn on its intellect, and increases proportionately with the growth of those faculties, which are also necessary for the normal exercise of its mental powers; for should they in any way be impaired, the intellect cannot have free play.

It should not be inferred therefrom, however, that because the intellect—man's supreme faculty—has recourse, in its operations, to the instrumentality of the senses, it therefore depends, in its essence, upon these senses whether external or internal. The truth is that, unless these faculties supply the sensible images of things, the intellect will be without objects to contemplate. And the power of the human intellect is so great that, by turning to those sensitive images, it can penetrate the wall of material things and reach intellectual truth, which indeed is the end for which it was created.

Thus it is that intellectual knowledge is far superior to sensitive knowledge, although mental speculation, in the present life, is always accompanied by sensible images. But, because of the close and intimate union of all our faculties in

one and the same personality, it is not always easy to say where the sensible image ceases and the intellectual perception begins. Whence it follows that the more capable a man becomes of penetrating the material wall of sensible images, the easier and fuller is his access to the reading of that spiritual truth which lies beyond them.

II. *The Knowledge of the Soul after Death.*

The present condition of life is such that perfect freedom from the sensible images of things is not possible, simply because of the intimate union existing between the higher and lower faculties. But is the same to be said of the future condition when death shall have separated body and soul?

No. When by death the soul has been left in its state of pure intellectual substance, though still with a constant inclination to its former body, it will then be capable of pure intellectual speculation without having recourse to the medium of the senses and to the material images which in life accompany all our thoughts. The images or representations of things in our minds will then be altogether spiritual, such indeed as are proper to angelic spirits who, being free from matter in their essence, are also free from every concurrence of material phantasms in their specu-

lations. The mode in which angels derive spiritual images will then also be the mode in which the human soul will derive them, so that the moment it departs this life it receives immediately from God an influx of intellectual images, in the contemplation of which it will perform its intellectual operations.

Whence it follows that the soul, after death, will not, as in the present life, have to go out of itself, as it were, in order to know the things of this world, but it will, by these intellectual inward images, arrive at the knowledge of outward things.

As regards its own self no such image will even be necessary in order that the soul may contemplate its own being; but, by an immediate introversion, it will intellectually feed upon itself, just as if the material light were able to see itself, it would do so without the intervention of any other light. And, in this spiritual light, which is the soul's very essence, it will also naturally see God, in so much as it is in itself a spiritual reflection of the Deity—a wonderful process of which we are incapable of forming an exact idea in the present state of union of body and soul, however much we may concentrate our thoughts upon ourselves. And yet such a process will naturally flow from the very state of our soul after death, since without the infusion of those spiritual images it would be in a state of complete inactivity and could

have no mental operation whatever, a thing contrary to its very nature.

III. *A Comparison between our Knowledge during Life and our Knowledge after Death.*

What, it may now be asked, is the difference between the knowledge which the soul thus naturally possesses after death and that which it possesses in this life? Will that knowledge then be of a more perfect character, and will it embrace a wider range of intellectual objects?

It should be borne in mind that, as already pointed out, we are here only considering the knowledge which, according to the laws of nature, is peculiar to the soul after death, and which is possessed by all alike, good and bad, ignorant and learned. Of the knowledge of the Divine Essence, which is called the Beatific Vision, we are not treating here. Now, in order to understand what the natural knowledge of the soul after death is, it is sufficient to remember that, though the spiritual images impressed on the mind after death are of a more universal nature than the images in which, during life, we contemplate the objects of our knowledge, yet are they of a less definite character, that is, they are confined to things in general, not to things in particular.

Consequently the knowledge of the soul after death, though it be of a more universal character,

does not convey such a distinct notion of individual objects as does the knowledge we have during the present life. In fact the state of the soul is changed after death but its natural mental power remains unaltered. The circumstance, then, that for the more limited images of this life other images of a larger range are actually substituted brings but little advantage to the soul's knowledge, since that knowledge implies a certain want of proportion on the part of the mind with reference to those general images. Our soul will then experience, as it were, a certain inability of turning to those images, and it will consequently fail to grasp, as angels do, each particular object contained in the images.

To illustrate this truth and to mark the difference which exists between the knowledge natural to angels and the knowledge natural to our soul after death, we only need take an example from what we ourselves know to take place in the ordinary didactic process of the human mind.

If, whilst endeavouring to teach others, we meet with a pupil of superior intellectual power and comprehension, it may be enough, on our part, to present him with general principles, without deducing for him in detail all the conclusions that flow from those principles, the pupil's intellect being of itself capable of drawing

those conclusions which, at a glance, may be perceived to be included in the general principles. But, with an intellect of inferior capacity, the teaching process is a more laborious one. To lead such an intellect to a thorough comprehension of those principles, it is necessary that the teacher should disclose to it, one by one, all the various conclusions which may be deduced from them. It is only then that it can be said to comprehend those general principles in all their application. To present to it those general principles only and not their inferences and deductions, would not be sufficient, seeing that the pupil's understanding lacks intuitive powers necessary to draw them for itself. The knowledge imparted would in that case remain of a more general character and would be deficient in that exactness of application which is the perfection of all knowledge.

The same thing applies to the separated soul as compared with angels. Whilst in the images they have, angels can see all the individuals of the various species, together with all the most minute details belonging to them, the human soul can only see in those images the general principles: of the infinite number of particular objects contained in those images it can only know a limited portion, greater or smaller as the case may be, as we shall more fully explain later on.

Indeed it may be said that the departed soul has lost that power of knowing particular objects which it had when united to the body. For, so long as the present life endures, our knowledge is more definite and articulate, simply because the soul, being bound to the body, has to have recourse to the senses in order to reach the knowledge of truth, and the perceptions of our senses are of a definite and particular nature.

It follows from this that, during this life, the spiritual images in which our mind contemplates the truth, are not of such a general character as to preclude the distinctness of the different objects contained in those images. But when this union is broken by death, and our soul is placed under the immediate influence of the divine light, the very nature of this light is as it were too strong for us. Our mind was not made for such glaring brightness, but rather for a more subdued light, and so, after death, the soul remains somewhat dazzled in the contemplation of those spiritual images, without distinctly perceiving the particular objects virtually contained in them. It is as if the outlines of things seen in those pictures or images were less marked and resulted in less clearness and distinctness of the knowledge of the things represented in the soul's vision.

We must conclude then that, although the

range of our soul's knowledge will, after death, be in some way naturally wider than it is in the present life, yet will it lack that distinctness and precision in which the perfection of all knowledge consists.

IV. *What particular Objects the Soul can know when separated from the Body.*

It should not be concluded from what has been said that the soul, after death, will not in any way perceive particular objects. Our contention is that it will not then perceive those objects as it does now, moreover that it will not perceive them as the angels do.

That some special objects will come within the reach of the separated soul for the knowledge of which objects the spiritual images spoken of above will be efficacious means of representation, cannot be doubted.

But it is not easy to state with perfect precision what these particular objects will be, seeing that they may vary according to the condition of each individual soul. Yet we may safely state that each separated soul will then know itself much more perfectly than it does now, and that in this knowledge of itself it will know God, not as the saints see Him who contemplate Him face to face, but as we see in a mirror the objects therein reflected.

For the soul, with its intellectual power, will then be like a spiritual mirror, reflecting in an imperfect way, it is true, but more perfectly than material creatures can do, God's infinite perfections: so that by seeing itself the soul will also see, in a natural way, God's perfections.

Now what other objects besides itself and God will the disembodied soul know?

In the first place, it will have the recollection of things known during the present life. For it is a point of Catholic Theology, which is generally admitted in spiritistic communications, that the knowledge acquired during this life endures even after death.

Of course the manner in which this knowledge is recollected by the mind after death is different from what it was during life. In the present life memory requires to be accompanied by sensible images; but, after death, those sensible images cease; so that the knowledge acquired is, as it were, bound up together with the spiritual images supplied to the soul by God for its intelligence.

But this special kind of knowledge, namely the knowledge acquired in life, will vary greatly, as will be readily understood, in different individuals: so that it must be considered nil in children who die before having the use of reason. On the other hand it will be of very wide range in

men whose lives have been spent in profound study, an infinite number of degrees being easily imaginable between these two extremes.

Besides the knowledge acquired in life, we may say that the separated soul will also have a knowledge of those objects to which it is, in its new state, in some way determined, that is, by some affection or by some natural relationship. And again, under this head, a very great difference may exist between the knowledge of one soul and that of another, not all souls being in the state of separation from the body equally disposed or affected towards different objects.

We will now endeavour to explain wherein this difference consists.

First of all, with regard to God, it is evident that not every soul is equally inclined towards Him: some may be His friends, others His enemies; and consequently, though each soul, as has been said, sees God naturally in itself, yet the aspect under which the good souls see Him must needs be different from the aspect under which He appears to the wicked: to the former, God must appear as a kind friend, and a tender father; to the latter, on the contrary, as a severe Judge.

The disembodied soul will also have some knowledge of angels, not of all angels, but of those with whom it may have established some sort of relationship during life. Indeed there is no doubt

that each soul will then know those angels under whose special influence it has been in life. These are on the one hand the guardian angel and on the other the tempting devil. It will moreover naturally know, to some extent at least, those angels whose company it actually shares.

Of other souls also departed out of this life, it cannot be doubted that the disembodied soul will have some knowledge, and indeed a much more perfect knowledge than it has in this present life, seeing that it will gain it, not by appealing for its considerations to any outward object, but simply by turning to its own self, it being as it were a mirror in which other souls may be seen.

But it does not follow from this that each single soul will naturally know all other departed souls. The knowledge of each soul will be restricted to such souls only as have been with it in some sort of actual relationship. Thus a disembodied soul may know the state and condition of the souls of those who, in life, were its relatives and friends and from whom it received some impulse, either towards the good and true or, as the case may be, in an evil direction. But, speaking generally, we may say that a soul will, after death, know those souls in whose state and condition it is interested, while of other souls it will naturally know nothing until the advent of the Day of Judgment, when the actions of each individual

soul, whether good or evil, will be made manifest to the whole world.

Further, the separated soul will naturally have some knowledge of the place it will be destined to occupy and which may be a place of happiness or a place of woe, according to the disposition of God's infinite justice.

To this knowledge, coming to the soul on account of its new state, we must add another source of knowledge, which is that coming from special revelations conveyed from God to the soul through the ministry of angels. For it may well be that God, from Whom the soul's illumination originally springs, and Whose providence rules all things mightily and sweetly, may impart, through the agency of angels, special light to some particular soul, and make known to it some special event of which it could not otherwise have any knowledge. Thus God may reveal to a particular soul, for some special end known to Himself alone, events with which that soul would otherwise have no relation whatever, and of which it would consequently remain entirely ignorant. He may, for instance, impart to a king some sort of knowledge of the affairs of what was once his kingdom, or to a father of a family He may reveal what the general state of his children may be on earth, or to a friend what are the varying fortunes of his friend, and so on.

To this may be added yet another source of knowledge, arising from the intercourse of one soul with another. This kind of communication of departed souls among themselves is all the more possible after death, as no words will then be necessary for the interchange of thoughts: indeed this communication takes place in a manner very similar to that in which angelic intercourse is carried on, as will be further explained.

These then are the different heads under which we may classify the natural knowledge which the soul will have after death concerning particular and determinate objects. First, it will know itself, and in itself know God, with this difference, that, while it will know itself with great certainty and accuracy, it will know God only imperfectly. Secondly, it will retain that knowledge which it may have acquired during life. Thirdly, it will be acquainted with those particular persons or objects for which it has a special interest, or with which it is in some way naturally connected. Fourthly, special revelations may be made to the separated soul as it may please the providence of God. Lastly, the soul may draw some new information from its conversation with angels or with other souls.

Beyond these sources of information, the soul, after death, will have no other means of knowing the things of this world: because, being cut off

from the life of the senses and from earthly environments, and transferred into the invisible world of spirits, it will not then be able to perceive the vicissitudes peculiar to the life on earth. Hence it will be a stranger to wars and rumours of war, to the fall of empires, the ruin of thrones, the changes of dynasties, and such like temporal events.

But it must be carefully borne in mind that, besides the knowledge of which we are here speaking, there is in store, for the holy souls, another source of knowledge, infinitely surpassing all that can be imagined. It is the knowledge of God's essence face to face, from which the Blessed derive their happiness and in which they may know all that they may desire to know of the things of this world. Of this knowledge, however, we cannot speak in this place, where we are treating only of what the human soul may gather naturally and what is more or less common to all separated souls.

It will be seen, then, that the knowledge of the disembodied souls is far inferior to that of the angelic spirits to whose mental perception each individual object is present together with all its attending circumstances.

As regards the knowledge of the natural sciences in particular, the separated soul can in no wise be compared with the angelic in-

telligences. For, excepting the knowledge which it may have acquired in life, it has no natural means of ascertaining the various workings of the laws of nature. Hence the vicissitudes of the physical world, the possibilities of which are so far-reaching, are to the disembodied soul a closed book.

As regards the secret thoughts of the human heart and future events, the soul, after death, cannot, any more than the angelic spirits, know anything, although, by making use of what it already knows about the things of this world, it may prognosticate the future even as angels do; but, since the present world lies outside its reach, it may very well be that the things which it may have foreseen, may in reality take place without its being aware of the fact.

Now how is that special knowledge of worldly affairs, to which we have just now alluded, imparted to the separated soul? For we know that the soul after death is deprived of the use of the external senses which are the one necessary medium by which knowledge of external objects can be conveyed, hence it would seem incapable of knowing anything. The answer to this question is contained in what has already been said above, viz., that the images infused into the soul are the proper channels by which it comes into possession of that knowledge. And these images emanate from God and vary in their

character according to the number of objects which they are made to represent.

It may be that from this survey of the soul's natural knowledge after life, a spiritist may well thus far think himself justified, even from a Catholic view, in drawing conclusions favourable to his own position. If it be true that the soul, in passing the threshold of death, carries along with it the knowledge which it has acquired in life, if moreover its new state supplies it with fresh sources of information, and if it also enjoys the benefits of intercourse with friends in the other world as well as occasional revelations, is it not reasonable to expect that at least some of the nobler among the departed souls possess knowledge and information sufficient for the instruction and illumination of men not yet freed by death from the burden of the body? The disclosures made at spiritistic *séances* are, as is well known, frequently ascribed to personages that have been conspicuous in life for their mental achievements. Might we not, then, thus reasonably account for at least a certain number of the modern spiritistic manifestations?

Such an inference would be perfectly admissible were it not for the further consideration of the power and proper mode of action of the separated soul, to which point we have still to direct our attention. That power cannot, as we shall see,

compare with that of the angels who are able to form for themselves bodies, and who, by means of these bodies, can hold intercourse with us. As a matter of fact the separated soul does not possess any such power. Moreover, the disembodied soul does not dwell among the living, nor is there any reason why it should ever leave its proper abode. Amongst the angels, on the contrary, as will be shown hereafter, there are some of a low moral order who inhabit and roam about this earth, and who have it in their power, with God's permission, to cause many of those phenomena which, at first sight, appear so very wonderful to us. But these differences will be more clearly brought out as we advance in our study.

V. *Whether Spiritistic Manifestations can be attributed to Departed Souls?*

Coming now to the manifestations taking place at spiritistic *séances*, and involving the disclosure of things unknown to the persons participating in them, the question which presents itself is: Can these manifestations, as it is claimed, be ascribed to the agency of departed souls?

Our answer is: Granting for a moment, and for argument's sake, that a direct intercourse between departed souls and living men were possible, it would still have to be objected that many of the spiritistic manifestations involve a power of

perception on the part of the communicating intelligences of which the departed soul cannot possibly be conceived to be capable.

This holds good especially with regard to those communications by which new and startling disclosures are made regarding the natural world, such, for instance, as meteoric phenomena, which lie altogether outside the reach of our experiences; or the manifestation of hidden treasures, of sudden accidents, or of future natural events. In the same way the speaking with diverse tongues, the giving of precise details about the arts and sciences, or about unknown occurrences—these and all manifestations of a like order cannot possibly be attributed to the agency of departed souls.

As regards events occurring at a distance, it should be noted that local distance constitutes in itself no impediment to the knowledge of disembodied souls as some philosophers have thought. For, assuming that the soul, after death, no longer obtains its knowledge, as during life, from the consideration of sensible objects, but that this knowledge is derived from the images emanating from the divine light—which light is independent of local distance—it follows that local distance is in itself no impediment to the knowledge of the disembodied soul.

And in the same way when we say that the

disclosure of distant events is beyond the power of the disembodied soul, it is not because local distance in itself creates the difficulty, but because such knowledge (clairvoyance, as it is termed by spiritists) lies entirely outside its field of perception, those particular objects alone being known to it to which it is determined in the way explained above. But, even supposing the knowledge of the disembodied soul to equal that of the angelic mind, we would still have to consider how it could communicate such knowledge to a living being, and whether it could illuminate a person's mind in the same way that an angel can.

Our answer to this will, we trust, throw a new light on the subject of spiritistic manifestations, while our solution of the further question as to the extent of the power possessed by the disembodied soul over the elements of the world (which we propose to consider in the next section) will furnish the mind with the information needed to solve the problem whether the modern manifestations of spiritism are to be attributed to the souls of men, or to a superior order of intellectual agents whom we call pure spirits or angels.

The point under consideration then turns upon the twofold question:—(1) Whether the disembodied soul can manifest its thoughts to us in this present life, and (2) whether we can in this life communicate our thoughts to a disembodied soul.

Before entering upon a consideration of these questions, however, we propose, for clearness' sake, to inquire, first, whether disembodied souls can communicate with each other, and also in what manner we communicate our inmost thoughts and desires to each other in the present life.

A fourfold inquiry then lies before us: first, whether and how two or more disembodied souls can converse together; secondly, how two individuals in the present life communicate their thoughts and desires to each other; thirdly, whether a disembodied soul can manifest its thoughts to us; and fourthly, whether we can make known our thoughts to a disembodied soul.

The second point will give us an opportunity of examining, at some length, a twofold theory put forward by modern scientists with a view to discovering a natural origin for some among spiritistic communications, viz.:—the theory of the unconscious subliminal self already alluded to, and the theory of mental vibrations.

VI. *Whether and How Departed Souls can Converse Together?*

With regard to the first question whether and how two or more disembodied souls can converse together, there can be no doubt that the soul after death can communicate to another its

thoughts and desires in the same way in which angelic intelligences can.

For the obstacle which, in life, prevents immediate intercourse and necessitates the intervention of sensible signs, is removed by the disappearance of the body; and, as one angel converses with another simply by directing his intellect to the intellect of his companion, so the mental communication between two disembodied souls is effected by the simple turning of the mind of one to the mind of the other. And in this manner the soul, too, can communicate with the angelic intellect, if it so desire, its state of separation from the body having made it in this respect like unto those pure spirits.

As the condition of our souls after death, moreover, is independent of the conditions of time and space, it follows, that local distance is no impediment whatever to this spiritual intercourse, even as local distance is no impediment to angelical substances seeing and knowing one another.

It should not, however, be inferred from this that the communication which one soul desires to have with another, must necessarily be known to all the inhabitants of the invisible world; for, as the communications with which we are dealing depend altogether on the free-will of the speaker, and this speaker may object to his thoughts being

made known to others, the conversation of the departed soul is, as in the case of angels, hidden from the knowledge of strangers, and known to themselves and to God only.

VII. *How we Communicate our Thoughts to our Fellow-men in the Present Life.*

This second question: How man, during his present state of life, communicates his thoughts to his fellow-men, is easily solved, if we consider that our tongue is the organ of speech by which we can express our thoughts, and by which, by arresting the hearer's attention, we cause him to apprehend what our words are meant to convey. Writing, gestures, and other conventional signs are only substitutes for the organ of speech. Thus our intellectual intercourse with our fellow-men is effected partly by means of our natural organs, supplying the means of communication, and partly by previous agreement respecting the signification of the words or signs employed.

The question however here which is much more difficult of solution is this: Can an entirely spiritual communication, by some mysterious means at present not fully understood, such as the concentration of our thoughts and wills, be directly carried on with other living persons in a manner similar to that in which angels and separated souls communicate one with another?

On the solution of this question depends our acceptance or rejection of the telepathic theory. According to this theory it is claimed that there exists some physical means (hitherto unknown to science), other than the use of speech, of writing, or of any other sensible and conventional sign, by which it is possible for one person to make known his thoughts and intentions to another or to more persons, not only when these persons are present, but also when they are separated by great distances from each other.

Now, in order to explain any such mysterious communication, one or other of these hypotheses only is conceivable.

(1) Either an unconscious subliminal or inferior self is, with or without the agency of a medium, made to project itself from the communicator to the person whom he desires to reach;—or (2) some waves of mental vibration, having for their substratum a certain kind of radiating neurotic fluid, may be imagined to be put in undulatory motion by the thinking intellect, and to be awakening in the other intellect similar thoughts and desires, perhaps in the way in which light emanating from a star reaches our eyes, or the sound of a speaker's voice conveys to us his thoughts;—or (3) these communications must be attributed to some immaterial or spiritual entity, independent of and distinct from our own minds

and souls; in such a way that we be able to manifest our thoughts and desires to this entity, and this entity, in its turn, manifesting its own thoughts and desires to us.

We now propose to examine each of these three hypotheses. The rejection of the first two will imply the acceptance of the third.

VIII. *The Theory of the Unconscious Subliminal Self.*

From the fact that in abnormal conditions of life, such as artificial sleep, hypnosis or the trance state, there would seem to be manifested in man a kind of secondary mental faculty, busily at work with the elements accumulated either consciously or unconsciously in the course of time and through one or other of the senses, and giving rise to operations which to the performer himself are often a source of astonishment, it has been inferred that a second individuality is contained in our human personality which must be made responsible for a series of manifestations not only distinct from the operations of our known personality, but also at variance with the mode of action of our conscious selves.

This special individuality has been called the subconscious, secondary or subliminal self, in contradistinction to the normal, conscious and supraliminal self, which is under the control of the

ordinary waking mind. This subconscious mind, it is assumed, is exceedingly sensitive, and possesses an extraordinary power of receiving and of retaining even the slightest impressions of which the supraliminal mind may often have no knowledge whatever.

As to the manner in which this subliminal self is made to account for the various spiritistic phenomena Mr. J. G. Raupert[1] writes as follows:—

"It is apt, under certain abnormal conditions, to pose as an entity, wholly distinct and separate from the normal self, and by a casting of the knowledge at its disposal into dramatic form, to play the part of an extraneous and outside intelligence.

"In spiritistic circles where the dominating thought is that of communion with the dead, and where this thought may be supposed to act as a suggestion to the mind of the sensitive, this part is apt to be that of some deceased friend or relative, respecting whom the mind may have an exceptional amount of information, and from whom a communication is particularly desired.

"Experiment would further seem to indicate, we are told, that this subliminal consciousness may, under certain exceptionally favourable circumstances, come in telepathic contact with

[1] *Modern Spiritism*, p. 91, fol.

the minds of persons in psychical affinity or *rapport* with it, and may abstract from those minds, or perhaps passively receive from them, information or intelligence which it may manipulate in its own particular way, and for the purpose of effectively completing its personation of the deceased personality.

"We have here then, it is claimed, all the material necessary for constructing a case in favour of a purely natural explanation of a vast mass of apparently independent and so-called spiritistic phenomena. They may be accounted for by the action of the subliminal consciousness, operating in obedience to suggestions received from spiritistic inquirers, and in conjunction with the minds of the sitters, and producing, by a natural process of personation, all the appearance of independent and extraneous spirit-action."

Now, whatever the part that one may desire to attribute to this subliminal self, and considering it only as an entity distinct from our superior self, the question is, What must be said about this theory?

If by a subliminal self is meant, not a distinct entity, but only a certain class of unconscious manifestations which are in us the effect of previous habit and which escape our control, the acceptance of the theory cannot meet with any difficulty whatever.

But, what we here consider, and what is really meant by the upholders of the subliminal theory, is the assumption that this kind of subconscious manifestation is due to a separate personality, distinct from the normal one, and operating on lines entirely different from it. Now the assumption of the existence of any such distinct personality is contrary to the postulates of Catholic philosophy.

As we have already observed, the introduction of a subliminal or inferior self, distinct from our superior or supraliminal entity, besides its arbitrary and unexplored character, meets with this fundamental difficulty, that it divides our human personality, the nature of which is to be essentially one.

Besides this, this theory has the fault of presenting to us, as part of our own selves, an object of which our conscience tells us absolutely nothing. This inferior self escapes, it is assumed, our notice and eludes our control, so that however deeply we may examine our innermost being, we can never realize it as part of ourselves. But if this entity were really an integral part of us, it ought to come, in one way or another, within the range of our intimate knowledge, and we ought, at least in some degree, to be conscious of it. And this would seem the more obvious from the fact that we acknowledge as our own even those actions which, at the moment of their performance,

escape our notice, but which we know from our own experience or from that of others to have emanated from us, although there is of course a vast difference between a passing action and an entity which endures, such as the subliminal self assumed to be.

But, leaving this aside, and granting that, contrary to what we have said above as to the impossibility of dividing the personality, such a being really does exist either in us, or in the medium of whom we may make use, the acceptance of it would still meet with this insurmountable difficulty, that such a self could neither be influenced by our minds, nor act upon the minds of those to whom we wish to communicate our thoughts. Our mind is, in its essence, of a wholly spiritual nature, whereas this subliminal being is, from the very condition of the case, made up of a certain kind of matter, which is wholly different from spirit, however subtle that matter may be imagined to be. Now it is impossible, both that our mind should act directly upon matter, and *vice versâ*, that matter should act directly upon our mind.

A subconscious material self which would act as a channel by which we may communicate, without words or signs of any kind, with persons either present or distant, is above the forces and laws of nature, our mind being incapable of communica-

ting its thoughts to matter, and matter, in its turn, being inadequate to receive or transmit thought except through conventional signs, such as human skill has either invented or at least perfected. A subconscious self, such as scientists imagine it, would have to be both material and immaterial: material because it is, under certain conditions, said to be visible to the senses, and immaterial because it is assumed to be the recipient and transmitter of immaterial thoughts.

This, however, will need further explanation, and the explanation itself may pave the way to a right understanding and criticism of the second hypothesis—that intellectual communications may be due to certain mental vibrations or ether-waves, these conveying to the percipient the thoughts and feelings of the person from whom they emanate.

IX. *The Theory of Mental Vibrations.*

That the theory of mental vibrations might seriously be entertained, one primary and necessary condition would have to be fulfilled. It would have to be shown that our wills possess and can exercise direct control over that subtle matter which is said to be the means of transmitting the thoughts of one mind to another, in the same way in which we exercise control over the words we utter or the pen we employ in order outwardly to express what is in our minds.

Now, although we possess a certain amount of control over the organs of our body, we have certainly no direct power over any extraneous matter. And the reason for this is not the fact of our soul's spirituality—for the angels also are spiritual and yet have great power over matter—but just because of the difference that exists between the nature of the soul and that of angelic beings. The angelic substances, being free from and superior to all matter, can act upon any kind of matter, but the human soul, being bound to an organic body, can act only on the matter of that body. Thus we may form in our imagination any phantasm we please and utter any word we like, but all the power of our will will not enable our soul to lift up as much as the weight of a straw without the use of external means.

It might here be objected, that although our mind or will has no direct power over matter, yet does it nevertheless exercise such power by making use of some organ, such as the finger, to set in motion an electric bell, or the tongue to converse through the telephone, and that thus the brain may in the same way, at the command of the free-will, set in motion a subtle substance emanating from the body, and may make it a channel of communication not unsimilar to that recently created by the construction of the wireless telegraph.

This is an objection which should certainly receive careful thought and consideration.

The notion that our thoughts might be but certain forms of a material substance of a definite character and capable of being projected in any direction, is a conception so gross and one so often examined and condemned, that its consideration here would involve us in too lengthy a discussion, and would moreover take us back to the question of the spirituality of the human soul. And as on the one hand this truth is not denied by intelligent spiritualists, and on the other it is impossible to agree with confirmed materialists as to the true character of mental operations, we shall refrain from a detailed exposition of the Catholic doctrine of the spirituality of the human soul and the nature of its operations. We have from the outset accepted its truth as the basis of our present consideration.

Taking it for granted, therefore, that the soul is a spiritual substance and that the operations properly belonging to it, viz., understanding and willing, are spiritual operations, and seeing that what is spiritual does not depend on matter and cannot be locally transferred as bodies can from one place to another, we must reject, as contrary to the soul's intrinsic nature, any system that seeks for an explanation of spiritistic phenomena

either in a local transmission of thought or in the projection of the will.

Let it be remembered that what we are considering here is whether the human mind can make use of some material substance of the nature of a magnetic fluid emanating from the peripheral nerves, and becoming, under the impulse of the will, the instrument of producing those psychological, physiological, or mechanical manifestations which are the effect of spiritistic practices.

X. *The Hypothesis of a Magnetic Fluid.*

This hypothesis has recently obtained special favour with scientists. It is, however, explained by them in a variety of ways. Some assume the existence of a neurotic magnetic fluid, emanating from the brain and travelling in the direction of the person to whom the attention is directed; others hold that extremely minute particles of brain substance are projected with great rapidity from the brain of the communicator to that of the recipient; others again postulate the creation and projection of brain-waves, not altogether unlike the Hertzian waves, which, having their starting-point in the brain-cells and terminating in those of the recipient, are the means of awakening in the latter corresponding thoughts and sensations.

All these theories, however, have this in common that they assume that, just as at the

command of our will, our brain and other organs of our body are set in motion, so by the exercise of the same power an extremely subtle but powerful substance, intrinsically conjoined to our body, is set in motion and is able to receive and to communicate at will any thought of our own mind which may impress itself upon it.

These mental waves account, we are told, for abnormal communications known to have taken place between persons at a distance or, it may be, occupying the same house or room, and it is maintained that this process which is only in its embryonic stage will, in the course of time and when science shall come to know more of this mysterious element, develop into an ordered system of communication between mind and mind.

Now what are we to say of such an explanation of the phenomena in question ?

In the first place, it is well to point out here once more that if the substance which is supposed to be the recipient of these mental impressions is to be regarded as extraneous to our body, it would be evident that so far the theory certainly could not be admitted, it having been shown that our will is powerless as regards the direct use of matter lying outside our own being. The hypothesis, therefore, is only admissible on the condition that the matter conceived to be the

substratum of these mental waves be considered as being intrinsically and vitally connected with our own substance, and as having its origin in us in such a way that, radiating from our brain-centre, no distance, however great, can cause it to cease to be part of that substance; it must be regarded as an extension, in fact, of our own personality.

And so far there would be no objection to this theory; there would be no reason why our will should not have the power of moving such matter, should it exist, seeing that it can bring about modifications in our brain and also move the limbs of our body.

Science, it is well known, has for some time been directing its keenest attention and interest to this wave theory, but the conclusions which have so far been arrived at are certainly not sufficient to give it any scientific standing, all the results of recent investigations being confined to mere physical phenomena, such as heat, light, and electricity—forces to which the mind-waves under consideration cannot be shown to be allied.

Yet there is nothing to prevent our facing the possibility of the existence of such a substance, for there is no reason, had God so ordained it from the beginning, why there could not be, strictly speaking, in our body, besides the other known elements, a substance of a very subtle

kind which, set in motion by the action of our will, should produce various changes and modifications in the elements surrounding it, and should do so even at a distance from the source from which they emanate.

But the question is: To what kind of phenomena could such matter, should it be proved to exist, give rise? Would they be of an intellectual or merely of a physical order? Could such material waves receive the impression of our ideas and thus convey them to another person at a distance? This is the first question which we shall have to consider. Our second question will concern itself with the phenomena of a purely physical or mechanical nature.

Now it must be evident that if this imaginary fluid or substance is to convey our thoughts to some particular person in such a manner that this person be able to perceive them, it would have to obey our will and take the direction intended and find its resting-place. And here is our first great difficulty. For, in order to be able to accomplish this, it would be necessary that this fluid should be an extension of ourselves, a substance animated by our own soul, the will itself being powerless as regards outside matter, and no substance being under its control which has passed the threshold of the body, as has been observed before.

Yet, supposing this fluid to be part of our

substance in such a way that we may be able to control it in the manner in which we can control our hands or our feet, there would be the further question: Is this fluid capable of receiving the impressions of our thoughts, at least in the same way in which our own brain receives them?

As we have already stated, this ethereal substance might, strictly speaking, act as our brain does, that is, receive sensible impressions corresponding to our thoughts, provided, however, that it remain united to us and be quickened by our soul, for inorganic matter cannot serve as an organ of sensation. Hence those images which are supposed to be received in that ethereal substance cannot be the means of thoughts except in so far as they are connected with our soul. Of themselves they are simply physical modifications of matter, and become a principle of knowledge only in so far as the subject to which they belong reads into them. Those images would, therefore, be a means of knowledge only in and for the subject to which they belong. It would be the same as if our soul, instead of making use of the cerebral organ, made use of the magnetic fluid for an identical end and purpose.

It will be seen, therefore, how many postulates this theory of mental vibrations demands in order to be even thus far acceptable; first, a vital extension of our brain matter; secondly, the

reception in it and preservation of sensible images; thirdly, the power of the will to project this matter in any chosen direction.

And supposing we here further grant that this fluid, set in motion by our brain, really comes in contact with the brain of the person with whom we wish to communicate, can the thoughts of the first brain be thus conceived to impress themselves upon the second? These images, as we have pointed out, are essentially those of the first brain; now, is it possible that the second brain, supposed to be in contact with the substance emanating from the first, so apprehends those images as to know what this first person is thinking about?

We cannot admit any such possibility. For, as these mental images are vital images, they are principles of knowledge only for the person in whom they originate. The brain-fluid may perhaps rouse another person in a general sort of way, but the images which it conveys must remain a sealed book to him, for the simple reason that knowledge is not communicated by the transfer of mental images from one subject to another, but by an intelligent being exciting within himself his innate power of forming the images for himself, both the acquisition of knowledge and the contemplation of it being a personal vital action.

All, then, that this supposed vibrating mental fluid could be said to be effecting would be a kind of material stimulation of the recipient's mind in a vague and general way, without, however, causing it to think of one particular object more than of another. Cold and heat, light and darkness, or sounds of an indefinite nature, are thus apt to excite in us some general reflection, without, however, fixing our thoughts on any particular subject.

In order that these magnetic waves emanating from the brain should produce a corresponding thought or impression in another brain, it would be necessary for them to act in some conventional manner and according to some previous agreement, just as writing operates as a conventional sign between friends at a distance from each other. There is, however, no such agreement in this case.

The wave-theory, therefore, inadmissible as a proven fact, cannot be reasonably entertained even as a hypothesis, and cannot be considered as furnishing a plausible explanation of those unseen and direct communications taking place through spiritism or practices akin to it, and, as in some instances, between persons placed at a great distance from each other. It is a theory wholly made up of assumptions and suppositions, and one which falls to the ground immediately it is closely examined and analyzed.

And now what are we to say of the physiological and mechanical effects said by some spiritists to be produced by the mere energy of the will? Can we regard the vibratory-neurotic-fluid-hypothesis as sufficient to explain the phenomena of local movements in natural bodies, of partial or total insensibility in men or beasts, of cataleptic and hypnotic states in persons influenced by the operator?

In the first place, let it be noted that material agents, however subtle and active, never act instantaneously. Their energy is subject to fixed laws of time and of space. It is thus that we can measure with perfect accuracy the time employed in the transmission of light or of electricity, and also determine the quantity of energy spent by these natural agents or required for specific effects. But in the phenomena supposed to be taking place by means of this radiating neurotic fluid, no definite length of time can be registered between the moment in which the will issues its command and the moment in which the effect takes place; nor is it possible to determine the distance allowed for the induction of the phenomenon, or the exact proportion between cause and effect.

But what we would particularly point out here is that, even granting that such a fluid emanates from our brain or is in vital connection with it so

as to be the recipient of a series of ethereal vibrations under the control of the will, such effects should be of a definite and ascertainable nature, just as the properties and operations of natural bodies are confined within certain limits and are ruled by certain fixed laws. They ought to take place constantly, not by caprice and by fits and starts, but in the same orderly manner and with the same regularity with which the effects of other natural agents are produced. The well-known magnetic power, for instance, is subject to unvarying laws, and its effects take place according to a fixed order.

The spiritistic phenomena, on the contrary, are not effected except under conventional circumstances and with an explicit or implicit consent to certain practices. And when they are effected, it is in such an irregular and desultory manner as to point to the probability that not a natural fluid or natural vibrations, but rather hidden intelligences, acting according to a plan wholly independent of the operator's intention, are at work.

But here, again, we must repeat that although science may record some accidental bodily modification, consequent upon a certain form of brain activity, yet are such modifications of a purely natural character and altogether inadequate to create any such system of undulatory vibrations as would be sufficient to explain the production of

the extraordinary phenomena which take place at spiritistic *séances*.

If in the case of some mediums a certain kind of fluid has been seen to emanate from the many nerve papillæ which are spread all over the surface of the human body, it should be borne in mind that it is not beyond the power of pure spirits to produce such a phenomenon, and to thus create the impression that what is in reality an extraordinary occurrence is due to the action of natural causes.

We must conclude, then, that the spiritistic phenomena, whether psychological, physiological, or mechanical, can neither be the result of the working of the human will or intelligence, nor the outcome of the action of some unknown subtle fluid or substance which is at the control of the will.

The theory of mental vibrations, therefore, with which neither the phenomena occurring in the ordinary course of nature nor those taking place in spiritistic *séances* are in agreement, cannot be admitted. And this applies equally to those other similar systems, such as that of the radiating or astral force, or the exteriorization of moving force, which have recently been excogitated in order to explain the phenomena. Such theories in reality present to us mysteries quite as great as those which they are proposed to solve.

From all this we have to infer, then, that in the

various phenomena to which spiritistic practices give rise, intelligences of a superior order are at work—intelligences with which we can enter into communication if we desire to do so, and which on their part can in some way act upon our imagination, and thereby upon our intellect. These intelligences, having the power of transferring the elements of matter from one place to another, can produce effects which appear to us of a very striking and marvellous character.

Now if it be borne in mind that these effects do not surpass the power which we know to appertain to angelic beings, it will be seen that the so-called telepathic communications may well be attributed to those pure spirits. Whether these are of a high or of a low moral order will be more clearly seen as we advance in our study.

XI. *Whether a Separated Soul can Communicate its Thoughts to us?*

We now come to an examination of the third question proposed: whether a separated soul can communicate with souls in the present state of life.

Can the human soul, when it has departed from the body, hold intercourse with the living and manifest to them things connected with its new state? We say things connected with its

new state, because we have already explained the extent of the soul's knowledge after death, and have shown that a knowledge of future things, of secret thoughts, of ordinary events, and also for the greater part of the secrets of nature, must be denied them. Should, therefore, such an intercourse between the dead and the living be possible, it would needs be of a very limited nature—that is, it would have to be confined to the manifestations of certain truths or facts connected with that soul's new state.

But can even this much be communicated by a disembodied soul to a soul not yet freed by death from the body?

The answer to this question must, like the preceding one, be in the negative. For our mind or intellect, in the present state of union of soul and body, can be reached by a mere creature, whether corporeal or spiritual, only through the medium of the imagination, inasmuch as we are naturally led by those sensible images into the knowledge of truth. Now, the soul separated from the body has no power whatever over the phantasms of our imagination, because matter is not subject to its sway as regards local motion; and therefore a disembodied soul cannot by itself illuminate or instruct us in any way. This truth, however, that the disembodied soul has no power over matter, will be more specially examined later

on, when we speak of the power of departed souls[1].

We may infer, then, that the disembodied soul is, in this respect also, in a condition far inferior to that of the angels, who, by drawing our attention to the sensible phantasms of imagination which they have the power of exciting in us, can manifest to us truths very remote from our senses, or even things unknown to any mortal man ; but the disembodied soul can exercise on us no such influence, and for this reason it may be said to be naturally cut off from all communication with the living.

But if the departed soul is unable to reach our mind and to make known to us its thoughts or desires, can we, on our part, manifest our thoughts to the departed souls, either by sensible signs or by inward communication of the mind ?

We propose to consider these two points separately, and it will be seen that a negative answer must involve the conclusion that a direct communication between the living and the souls of the departed is altogether impossible.

XII. *Whether we can, through Sensible Signs, manifest our Thoughts to Departed Souls ?*

In the first place, as regards any sensible means we may use, such as speech, writing, gesticula-

[1] Section III.

tion, and the like, it has already been shown that such signs, being wholly unconnected with the new condition of the disembodied soul, do not naturally come within its reach, although they are apprehended by angelic substances.

The reason of this is because the angel's direct knowledge embraces not only spiritual objects, but also all the material phenomena of this world, among which we may reckon those sensible signs of which we speak; whereas the human soul, separated from the body, has indeed a knowledge of spiritual substances, but of the sensible phenomena of this world it only knows those with which it has a special affinity, as we have already explained above. Now, among the phenomena which the soul may know, those sensible signs which are the vehicle of thought with us cannot be numbered, as they wholly depend on the free will of those who first invented them or who actually make use of them, and therefore they have no natural affinity with the departed soul, to which they consequently remain totally unknown.

But, it will be further asked, what is the ultimate reason of the fact that an angel knows all the material phenomena of this world, whereas the disembodied soul does not? Is not the disembodied soul similar to angelic beings?

The reason why an angel embraces, in his simple and direct knowledge, all the material

objects of this world with their particular phenomena, and the disembodied soul does not, is to be found in the specific superiority of angelic beings over the human soul, whether united to the body or separated from it.

A simple survey of the world's constitution will convince us of the fundamental law, that a being of a superior order comprehends in its oneness and simplicity the different qualities of distinct beings of an inferior order, even as we see that our rational soul, which is but one, possesses in its simple unity the capabilities of the sensitive souls of animals and of the vegetative souls of plants, and is moreover capable of producing by itself the same effects which these distinct souls produce in the vegetative and animal order. And so angels, who are superior in kind to the human soul, comprehend in their simple and direct knowledge, not only general principles, but also material objects together with their particular phenomena.

Not so the human soul, which, being inferior in kind to angels, embraces, in its direct knowledge, in this life, general principles only, and cannot know particular objects or phenomena except indirectly—that is, in so far as the general principles or essences of things are contained in the particular or material objects of the universe.

Now to this knowledge of material objects and

of particular phenomena we come, during life, through the application of our sensitive faculties, by which we directly perceive material and particular objects; but, through the power of abstraction of our intellects, we next come to know the general principles or essences of things, which indeed are the proper and direct objects of our *intellectual* knowledge, while the particular and material things of this world are the proper and direct objects of our *sensitive* knowledge. Hence the human intellect embraces in its direct knowledge the general principles or essences of things only, and does not know particular or material objects except indirectly, inasmuch as in these particular objects are in some way contained the general essences of things.

Thus, to illustrate our meaning, when we see a plant, that particular thing and the phenomena connected with it are first perceived by the material eye and so are the direct objects of that sensitive faculty: but the nature or essence of plant—that indeed which is contained in every plant and is common to them all, is that which our intellect abstracts from that particular plant, and so constitutes the object of its direct knowledge, although our intellect, as distinct from our eye, comes to know thereby indirectly that particular plant and its phenomena, out of which

it has abstracted and in which it considers the universal nature of plant.

To sum up: we arrive in this life at the sum total of our knowledge by a twofold road, viz. by sense and intellect: sense embraces singular or material objects only and their particular phenomena: intellect embraces both general principles or essences and singular objects—the general essences directly, the singular objects indirectly. Angels, on the contrary, by reason of the superiority of their knowledge, apprehend by their intellect in a like manner both the general principles and the material objects together with their particular phenomena.

Hence it is clear that, as long as we have the use of the sensitive organs or faculties of our body, that is as long as the present life endures, we can always add to our knowledge of particular sensible objects, as also of their respective phenomena, which all come within the reach of our senses, and from which we abstract that universal knowledge which regards the general nature of things. But as soon as the soul is separated from the body, and only knows truth through the immediate influence of the general images infused into it by God, it is no longer capable of perceiving the particular objects, or the particular phenomena of this world, except in the way and measure explained above.

We may conclude then that the sensible signs by which, in this life, we manifest our thoughts to our fellow-men are to the disembodied souls a closed book; we cannot therefore by their means convey to them our thoughts or desires.

XIII. *Whether we can Mentally Manifest our Thoughts to the Departed Souls?*

Not only is it impossible for us to manifest our thoughts to disembodied souls by any sensible signs, but it is also beyond our power to do so in an inward mental manner; that is, by simply turning our minds to theirs, as is the case in our converse with angelic beings.

For such is the natural condition of our thoughts in the present life that, although of a spiritual nature in themselves, they are yet always attended by a corresponding modification of the brain, so that those alone among created intelligences are able to read our interior thoughts who have a clue to the sensitive images or phantasms of our imagination, the different modifications of which correspond to our different thoughts, just as the different arrangements of letters of the alphabet correspond to the different meanings of the writer.

But here again the question arises: How is it that we can directly manifest our thoughts to angels, and cannot do so to departed souls?

The reason is that the sensible modification of our brain which accompanies each one of our intellectual operations can be known by angels, who can thereby be led to the knowledge of our inmost thoughts. Not that a mere inspection of our cerebral modifications is of itself sufficient to lead angels to the knowledge of our thoughts; but that our willingness to manifest our thoughts to them gives them, as it were, a key whereby they may understand the meaning conveyed by these modifications.

Indeed it should be acknowledged that all such modifications of our brain may be used in sundry ways by the will, just as one word in our ordinary language may have sundry meanings. As we cannot exactly understand a written document unless we read into it the writer's meaning, so also is a mere inspection of the phantasms of our brain insufficient for an angel to know our own thoughts; he must besides read into our mind, which can only be done by the consent of our will: that is, by our choosing to turn our mind to him, and to thus give him the key to the understanding of those cerebral modifications which are the ordinary accompaniments of our thoughts during the present life.

Now can this be done with regard to the disembodied soul of man ?

We must here again answer that this is impossible, and that for the reason just given, namely, that the disembodied soul has of itself no clue whatever to the knowledge of these material and particular modifications of our brain to which we allude, and which, unless understood, constitute a barrier that intercepts the light of our mind and prevents it from shining outside ourselves. Thus the discarnate soul can very well communicate with angelic spirits and with other disembodied souls ; but just as it cannot make itself manifest to us, so it also cannot directly perceive the thoughts of any living person, even though this person be willing that his thoughts should thus be made known to the discarnate soul. For such a manifestation a medium of some kind is necessary, one who, while reading our thoughts, can also converse with the disembodied souls. But this is just the power appertaining to the angelic substance.

The idea, then, that we can freely and without the mediation of any other agent hold intercourse with the souls of our departed friends should be considered a poetical fiction rather than a philosophical truth. The fact is that the soul, departed from the body is, naturally speaking, so far cut off from all communication with the living,

that, as the world into which it has passed is altogether different from our material world, so also has its mode of conversation nothing in common with ours. The departed soul is to us an entire stranger, which neither understands our language, nor can be understood by us. A wide chasm separates it from us. This chasm, however, may be bridged by God's providence through the ministry of angels. Of such extraordinary interventions, however, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

SECTION III

THE POWER OF DEPARTED SOULS

Having thus spoken of the knowledge which the disembodied soul possesses, we must now pass on to consider whether it can exercise any power over matter.

We have seen that angelic beings can move material objects from place to place. They can lift into the air heavy bodies, collect the scattered elements of matter, bind them together, and dissolve them again as they please. And through the power of local motion which they are able to exercise, they can produce the strangest and most astounding phenomena in nature. They can illuminate the intellect, move the imagination,

make us partially or wholly insensible to external impressions, and cause in our body sundry modifications.

Now the question is: Can the disembodied soul produce similar effects? Has it power over the elements of matter?

In this connection we shall also have to inquire into the true nature of the apparition of the dead, and since the effects produced by spiritistic practices often have the appearance of miracles, we shall have to institute a comparison between miracles and spiritistic phenomena.

I. *Whether the Separated Soul has any Power over the Elements of Matter?*

The similarity existing between an angelic spirit and the human soul after death, together with the common habit of attributing to the separated souls what is proper to angels, may account for the widespread opinion that our souls, after death, will be able to act on material objects in the same way in which angels act upon them, that is, by transferring them from place to place. This, however, is a mistake, for the separated soul has no power whatever over the elements of matter.

The reason for this statement is to be found in that principle, so often insisted on in the present work, that the soul, being determined in its essence by its relation to the human body with

which it forms but one and the same whole, has no natural moving power except over the particular body which it quickens, whereas the moving power of angelic beings naturally extends to every kind of body, precisely because these beings are not bound by their essence to any particular body. In other words, we may say that the moving energy of our soul, in itself of a limited nature, is so restricted to the body it informs, as to be in some way exhausted thereby.

That our soul has no natural power of moving bodies to which it is not substantially united, appears evident from the fact that whereas it freely moves the limbs of the body as long as these are quickened by it and as it were permeated by its presence, essence and power, it ceases to be able to do so the moment one of those limbs withers, even though it may still be materially united to the whole.

On the other hand, although the new state which the discarnate soul acquires, causes it to undergo a change in its manner of understanding, no condition whatever exists in that new state which calls for a change in its manner of operating with regard to material substances; and so our soul, after death, is perfectly helpless, as far as the moving of the smallest material element is concerned. And the question here is not that of one soul rather than another, or of a body heavier

or lighter as the case may be, but of the fact that the human soul being in its very essence ordained to inform and to move a determinate material substance which is its proper body, is incapable of moving any other body whatsoever.

II. *The Spiritistic Phenomena cannot be attributed to the action of Separated Souls.*

Now, if the disembodied soul cannot in any way move the elements of matter, what are we to say respecting the phenomena taking place at spiritistic *séances*? Can that transfer of objects from one place to another, those mysterious noises emanating from chairs and tables and musical instruments, that spontaneous opening of doors and windows and the many other oft-reported and now so well-attested phenomena be attributed to the agency of departed souls?

We reply that this is wholly impossible, since such effects are altogether beyond the natural powers of the separated soul, although they are, of course, possible to angelic beings.

The same applies to the phenomenon known as materialization (the formation of the features of some deceased person in such a fashion as to be capable of reproduction by the photographic camera); to the giving of intelligent answers to definite questions (either by means of sound or of writing), and to all the phenomena of a like

nature with which we have grown familiar. Seeing that they one and all surpass the powers of the separated soul, which is not only unable to produce these sensible signs, but is also for the greater part naturally ignorant of the things thus communicated, we conclude that all such phenomena cannot possibly be attributed to the soul's agency.

But if this be so, what, it may be asked, are we to say of those apparitions of the dead, of which we find numerous instances recorded in history, and which would seem to involve on the part of the discarnate souls the power of moving and transferring material elements from one place to another ?

III. *Apparitions of the Dead.*

Although we assert that the disembodied souls have no power whatever over the elements of matter, we do not thereby intend to doubt, much less to deny, their occasional appearance in this visible world. The question is, how is this phenomenon to be accounted for ?

We must first of all entirely dismiss the idea that a separated soul, whether saved or lost, ever appears in person. God might, strictly speaking, impart the power possessed by angels over the elements of matter to a departed soul ; but, as this would mean an intrinsic change in the soul's properties and nature and as these appearances

can very well be conceived to be taking place in another manner more in accordance with the nature of things, we may altogether dismiss any such remote possibility.

It is therefore the received teaching of Catholic Theology that these apparitions take place through the instrumentality of angels who are able to reproduce the likeness of any person living or dead and who can act and speak as such persons once did. And as angels can know the thoughts of the departed, they can in that way communicate them to the living, thus justifying their names and being envoys as it were or representatives, whose utterances may be taken as proceeding from the particular person whom they represent.

Now we have in the first place to make a distinction between the angels themselves, a distinction which will be more fully explained later on. Some of them are good, others have fallen from their high estate. The former are God's ministers, and never act in this visible world except at His command ; the bad angels, on the other hand, are bent on rebellion against God, and habitually claim for themselves the responsibility of their actions, although they also at times are bound to act as the ministers of God's justice. Hence it follows that the visible effects which good angels cause in this world are always brought about by them through God's agency, and therefore are all

miracles; whereas the effects produced by bad angels are usually due to their own private action, in which case they are not miracles. The apparition of the dead, then, are miracles when taking place through the ministry of good angels; they are no miracles when taking place through the action of bad angels, unless these be acting at God's bidding.

But this is a truth which calls for fuller explanation, seeing that on the question whether spiritistic manifestations of the dead may or may not be regarded as true miracles depends the further question as to whether such manifestations have good angels or evil spirits for their authors.

IV. *Different Kinds of Apparitions of the Dead.*

We must here introduce a distinction between saved and damned souls, between good and bad angels, which will be more fully explained in the following chapter.

Two distinct cases may be considered: first, the apparition of saved souls; and, secondly, the apparition of damned souls. It must be evident that the first can take place only through good angels, and the second only through fallen angels, it being highly unbecoming that holy souls should be represented by demons, or that the holy angels should represent damned souls. We may first

consider the case of an apparition of a saved soul taking place through the ministry of good angels.

In such a manifestation Catholic Theology acknowledges the presence of a true miracle, that is, of a work the principal cause of which is God, Who, setting aside the laws of nature, forms, through the ministry of good angels, the bodily likeness of some holy soul that has departed this life. Such formations, it is true, do not exceed in themselves the extent of the angel's power, and so far they are no miracles ; the miracle, however, consists in the circumstance that the angels not causing any derogation from the laws of nature except at God's command and precisely to the end God has in view, become simply His ministers, and that the work performed by them must be attributed to God as to the principal Agent, which is exactly the case in miracles.

Now, is the same to be said of apparitions of damned souls through the agency of wicked angels ?

First of all, let it be observed that it would be erroneous to conclude from the fact that a particular person is represented by bad angels, that this person is in reality to be numbered amongst the lost. It is characteristic of the fallen angels to distort truth to the utmost of their power ; it may well be therefore, and it is often the case, that they affirm, in the apparitions to which they give

rise, the presence of some known personality of a high moral standard, whereas there is in reality nothing of the kind, the manifestations being sheer deceit from beginning to end.

We may, however, consider the case when these fallen angels, of their own accord, choose to represent, not a saved soul, which is impossible, but a damned soul which shares their company. In this case, the fallen spirits would act as the chief agents, not, of course, without God's permission, yet not under His command; such apparition, therefore, would be no miracle, as in all miracles God is the principal Agent, and the creature is only an instrument. We can never, however, have any means of authenticating such apparitions, seeing that the devil is a spirit of lies, and that we cannot conceive of any advantage which the fallen spirits might derive from such genuine manifestations.

But the case assumes a different form if we consider these apparitions as ordained by God, Who, for His own wise purpose, may command one or other of the evil spirits to produce, by means of some visible elements, the apparition of a damned soul, and manifest to us its state and thoughts.

Although the formation of a human body is not above the fallen angels' power, and although they may know what the thoughts and sentiments of damned souls are, yet the moment God ordains a

fallen angel to take the likeness of a deceased person who is damned, and thus manifest his state for His own greater glory as also for man's salvation, such an apparition, if it should take place, is to be held as a true miracle. There is no repugnance in the idea that even fallen angels should be made God's instruments in the working of miracles; for they, no less than the good angels, are His ministers, bound to execute His orders, and thus to promote in their own way the Divine glory. But in such a case the fallen angels could not lie, but would be bound to tell the truth, since they would act as servants of the God of truth.

There is yet another case in which demons may act as God's ministers in the production of miracles, viz. by inflicting some special punishment on man: in which case they are also bound to obey the commands which God may have given them.

The authenticated apparitions of the dead, then, from whatever point of view we may choose to look at them, can only take place through a special derogation from the laws of nature, and are therefore true miracles. Consequently to admit all the spiritistic materializations, which are countless in number, to be so many authenticated manifestations of the dead designed by God, would be to admit such miraculous displays of Divine power as not only to surpass all that the Scriptures tell

us of such extraordinary interventions, but to be beyond the power of a normal and thoughtful mind to conceive.

It is well, however, that we should further show how utterly impossible it is that the spiritistic manifestations should be ordained or commanded by God and should be miracles, and consequently how they cannot be considered as genuine apparitions of the dead.

V. *The Spiritistic Manifestations are no Miracles.*

The hypothesis that the apparitions of the *séance*-room, asserted to be due to the action of disembodied souls, but in reality the work of spiritual substances, are true and real miracles, cannot be entertained for various reasons.

There is, in the first place, the abnormal frequency of these remarkable manifestations. It is admitted that one of the characteristics of true miracles is their rare occurrence. A miracle is the setting aside of the laws of nature, and God's wisdom being pledged to preserve undisturbed the order of nature, except for an adequate cause, miracles cannot be expected to take place very frequently.

There are, in the second place, the peculiar circumstances under which the apparitions take place and which make it more than improbable that they should be the work of God. It is true

God has, at times, in response to the earnest petitions of men, set aside the order of nature, and has through His angels caused some deceased person to appear again in this world: but this has never been done and in fact could never be done by Him except under openly moral circumstances and with a view to the highest good.

As a rule, miracles are answers to intense and deep-felt prayer; they manifest one or other of God's infinite attributes:—His goodness, His justice, His sanctity: they promote among men the exercise of virtue, and encourage them to a striving after what is holy and pure. The circumstances, on the other hand, which accompany the apparitions of the spiritistic *séance*-room are usually of a most frivolous character, the main object being the mere gratification of an unwholesome curiosity. The mediums moreover to whose agency these phenomena are due are not always beyond suspicion; while in the answers given falsehood and contradiction are apt to be mingled with elements of truth, and the practices themselves are not free from danger both to body and to soul.

Besides all this, miracles are so much the work of God's free will, that however intense our entreaties and supplications may be, we can never be absolutely sure that the very slightest miracle will be wrought on our behalf. In spiritism, on

the other hand, the mere presence of a powerful medium is certain to give rise to a variety of the most extraordinary and astonishing manifestations. When we further take into consideration the fact that acts of immorality of a very palpable nature not unfrequently accompany these exhibitions, it becomes clear that they cannot be the work of a thrice-holy God.

Now if the spiritistic manifestations are no miracles, they must be pronounced to take place not at God's command, but simply by His permission. God's command has for its object only what is essentially good, whereas His permission may include moral evil, even though in His infinite wisdom He knows how to turn this into good ultimately. Whence it follows that these manifestations are not to be attributed to good angels, who only work at God's command, but to spirits of a fallen order, as we shall show more fully later on.

This much, then, as regards the apparitions or manifestations of the dead through spiritistic practices.

With respect to the various kinds of phenomena brought about by these practices, we have already pointed out that they must be regarded as beyond the powers of the disembodied soul. When of an intellectual nature they mostly surpass the extent of its knowledge; when of the physiological or

mechanical order they exceed its power of operation.

On the other hand, it has been shown in the preceding paragraphs that such phenomena as the disclosure of things or events unknown, and the display of a mysterious force operating at spiritistic *séances*, may be attributed to the agency of angelic beings.

The conclusion, therefore, forces itself upon us that these angelic beings must be held responsible for the production of these various phenomena; for, besides the pure spirits and the disembodied souls, there are no other invisible agents to whom such effects could be ascribed.

Now, since the angelic substances are not all of an equally moral character, and the spiritistic phenomena are attended by circumstances suggesting a peculiar standard of morality in their authors, it becomes necessary for us to determine more particularly to what class or order of angelic substances these effects are to be ascribed, and what the special purpose and object of these spirits is likely to be in giving rise to such a variety of extraordinary phenomena.

To dissipate all misgivings about our intention, we must again impress upon the reader the fact that we are here dealing with spiritism properly so called, i.e. with practices which aim at obtaining information through intercourse with the souls

of the dead. We do not in any way desire to underestimate the efforts made by scientists of all times, but especially of the present age, to bring about new and useful discoveries through long and wisely conducted physical researches. On the contrary our thanks are due to them for the increase of the intellectual wealth of mankind which their researches have produced. We all know with what splendid results their labours have been crowned. But for all these discoveries there have been proportionate natural causes. The contention, however, that we may lawfully look forward for greater additions to the realm of science by entering into direct communication with the souls of the departed destroys the natural relation of cause to effect, and is therefore a perversion of the order of nature. The disproportion of the object aimed at to the means adopted is precisely what we propose to investigate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

The Spiritistic Phenomena Viewed with Reference to Angelic Beings

From what we have said in the preceding chapters it will have been seen that the spiritistic phenomena with which we are concerned can neither be attributed to disembodied souls nor to any kind of magnetic fluid as their proper efficient cause, the former being unable to produce such effects, and the latter being wholly inadequate for the purpose. They cannot, on the other hand, be ascribed to God's immediate agency, Who certainly cannot be supposed to be acting as a mere tool in the hands of His creatures. We must therefore look outside these factors for an agent which is both able and willing to produce the phenomena.

What that cause is will clearly appear from our present inquiry, in the course of which we purpose to examine, first, the nature of spiritistic practices; and, secondly, the different kinds of angelic beings. Thus shall we be able to solve the question

as to the kind of angelic beings to which these phenomena must be attributed, and at the same time show what the morality of spiritistic practices is. And as hypnotism and magnetism are but different forms of spiritism, we shall also point out in what relation these practices stand to the phenomena under consideration, and what must be concluded as to the lawfulness and morality of the experiments connected with them.

SECTION I

THE NATURE OF SPIRITISTIC PRACTICES

A careful study of the nature and properties of the angelic beings has led us to the conclusion that, apart from the question of their moral quality, they are capable of producing all the effects which take place in the *séance*-room. Their knowledge of the secrets of nature and of the events of this present life being of so wide a range, and their power with regard to the local transfer of the elements of matter being so great, the various spiritistic phenomena do not exceed the limits of their natural powers.

The question therefore which now presents itself is: Are these spiritual beings willing to produce these phenomena, and do they, in compliance with man's desire to communicate with the unseen

world, cause these wonderful changes in the visible universe which transcend the ordinary occurrences of nature?

In order to discover the right answer to this question we must consider, first, what is to be said as to the desire which some have to communicate with the unseen world; and, secondly, what is the moral character which these manifestations suggest, especially when viewed with reference to man's free-will exercised in the pursuit of these practices.

And as one of the essential requisites at most of the spiritistic manifestations is the presence and action of a "medium," we shall also have to inquire in what light we must regard these practices so far as the medium is concerned, and in what relation it stands to them.

We shall further briefly discuss an incident recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, for the intelligent understanding of which a short survey of the various spiritistic practices and the consequence attending them, as well as a consideration of what distinguishes true spiritistic phenomena from the mere action of the imagination, will be necessary.

I. *Practices Akin to Spiritism.*

Although we are here chiefly concerned with spiritism and its phenomena, our statements will have equal application to other allied subjects,

such as magnetism, hypnotism, and table-turning, inasmuch as these practices aim at placing us in communication with the inhabitants of the other world. Viewed under this aspect these various practices have a difference of origin but not of nature, since they all aim at the same end, viz. communion with the unseen world.

They are moreover a revival, in a modern form, of what has been known and practised in every age of the world's history. The auguries, the auspices, the aruspices and omens of the ancient Romans, the pythonism of Greece, the astrology, geomancy, aeromancy, hydromancy, pyromancy, and rabdomancy of the middle ages, and the more recent art of sortilege and palmistry have, together with spiritism and other practices of the present day, one common root,—that is: the giving of divine honour to mere creatures—an act in which the sin of superstition consists.

As regards astrology, a form of superstition which has received the special condemnation of the Church, it may be well to observe here that Catholic Theologians have never denied the influence of the heavenly bodies on atmospheric perturbations. They have readily admitted all that science can tell us of the physical influence which these agents exercise on tides and seasons, on the growth of plants, on the nervous system, and on some peculiar forms of human ailments.

They even grant (and this may perhaps seem excessive) that that influence may go so far as to reach the sensitive powers of man, and determine in his animal nature a peculiar disposition to passions such as jealousy or lust or anger. What the Church has reproved in astrology is the attempt to discover, by that means, what events are likely to take place in the future, as though the human will were necessarily determined by the influence of the heavenly bodies, and as though God were not free to act in man as He pleases, independently of such events.

And the same applies to the practices mentioned above. What the Church condemns in them is their abuse, not their right and lawful use, if such a thing can be said respecting some of them. It approves of those practices so long as they do not require entering into any kind of compact with the spirits of the unseen world, and provided their result can be turned to a useful and laudable purpose.

Now, while the ultimate aim of all the modern occult practices is identical, namely, communication with the other world, there is a difference in the various forms employed for that purpose. Sometimes the communication is sought by means of material elements, which is the case in table-turning; sometimes the medium used is a living person, either enjoying the free use of his senses

or in a state of cataleptic lethargy—this latter condition being that induced by the magnetizer or hypnotizer, and in common use in spiritistic practices.

Now compact with the spirits of the unseen world may be either explicit—that is, by the use of words, of writing, or of such like outward signs; or it may be implicit by the simple consent of the will, which has recourse to no outward expression. This consent of the will may, of course, be given even though the person may outwardly protest that he has no desire to enter into any kind of communication with the powers of darkness.

II. *A Classification of the Phenomena.*

The phenomena which we are considering are so varied in their form and character that this constitutes one of the greatest difficulties in the discerning of their proper causes. We may, however, group them all together under three heads.

Under the first we would include the phenomena of an intellectual or psychological order, such as the illumination of the mind or intellect termed clairvoyance, by which is meant the actual vision of objects placed at a distance from the seer; the disclosure of occult or future events; the manifestation of another person's secret thoughts; advice respecting bodily ailments, their cause and remedy; the reading of writing concealed in

various ways, locked up, it may be, in a desk; the phenomena of psychometry, by which is designated the power of accurately tracing the origin, mode of manufacture, and general association of some specific article, such as a pencil, a penknife, a drawing, a walking-stick, and the like.

Under the second heading we would group phenomena which we may call physiological, because they stand in special relation to the vegetative and sensitive order, such as the acceleration of vegetation, the suspension of vital functions (enabling a man to live without food and drink, and even without air, for a length of time); loss of memory; the acceleration of respiration and of the circulation of the blood; fibrillary movements; the execution, during hypnosis, of some plan mentally suggested by another; clair-audience, or the hearing of sounds beyond the reach of the hearer's ear; the sudden formation of swellings in some part of the body; partial or total insensibility, or even complete rigidity of the limbs; the speaking in unknown tongues; the vision of an object placed in immediate contact with any part of the body, and such like.

As regards this last phenomenon it should be observed that such vision does not take place through the transposition of the senses, as though the sense of sight, for instance, were transferred to our fingers or to our ears, or the sense of

hearing or touch could be made the organ of sight (which is intrinsically impossible); but the sense of sight is so acted upon by the occult powers as to present, as an objective reality, what is only a subjective modification of the sense itself—a phenomenon of which various instances are recorded in Holy Scripture[1].

Under the third heading we would place the mechanical phenomena which consist in some change in the elements of this world. Of this kind are the sudden production of light, heat, and sound; the transfer of objects from one place to another; the formation of human faces, limbs, or of even the entire person; automatic and planchette writing; inscriptions on sheets of paper enclosed in a box or desk, or hidden amongst other objects; changes in the temperature; echolalia, or the exact reproduction (similar to that of the phonograph) and by the medium's vocal organ, of spoken words or musical sounds; attraction and repulsion of a magnetized person; levitation, or the lifting up of organic and inorganic bodies; alteration of the weight of bodies, and such like.

These are the principal phenomena effected by spiritistic and other occult practices.

It should, however, be borne in mind that they

[1] Gen. xix. 11; 2 Kings vi. 18.

are not all produced by one and the same cause (table-turning, for instance, does not claim the power of causing an alteration in a man's body, much less of illuminating his mind), nor that they always take place in the same manner and form. Indeed, irregularity is a characteristic of these various practices. There is, however, an advantage in classing the different phenomena under the above three heads; it will enable the reader to see at a glance whether the effect produced is a modification (1) of senseless matter, (2) of the vegetative and sensitive organs of man, or (3) of his understanding and will.

It should further be observed that no classification of these phenomena can claim to be a precise one. The psychological and physiological effects under consideration are not brought about without some mechanical change taking place in the human constitution, and both effects may sometimes be exhibited in one and the same phenomenon. Thus, when the tongue is moved to utter statements about things or events unknown, or to speak a foreign language, the mind is sometimes, though not always, instructed to understand what the tongue is uttering.

Indeed, the multiplicity of the effects to which spiritistic practices give rise, the variety of forms which they are apt to take, the irregular and desultory way in which those effects occur, tend to

surround spiritism with an air of mystery which not only makes it impossible to always accurately distinguish between the various phenomena, but which also serves to place them beyond the reach of ordinary criticism and superficial investigation.

In many instances, too, fraud and genuine phenomena are so inextricably mixed up together that they greatly tend to increase the confusion already existing. And it cannot be too strongly insisted that a great deal of what we read in books and pamphlets about spiritistic manifestations cannot stand the test of careful inquiry. Much of it is written with too little discernment to deserve serious consideration, and much is manifestly the outcome of a heated imagination. Some people are strongly predisposed to see in the ordinary events of life manifestations of the unseen world. They see in the ordinary course of nature nothing but commonplace occurrences, and they look everywhere for preternatural interpositions. Their delight is ghost stories and the marvellous, and it is in that region that they seek for an explanation of perfectly natural manifestations. This, then, constitutes a great difficulty in the way of rightly distinguishing the true phenomena from the false.

It is nevertheless most emphatically stated that there is abundant and well-grounded evidence for the occurrence of genuine spiritistic mani-

festations, and it is with these alone that we are here concerned.

But before we pass on to consider the intrinsic moral worth of spiritistic manifestations, it will be necessary to further indicate how the genuine phenomena may be distinguished from what may at first sight appear marvellous, but what in reality does not surpass the power of natural forces. We intend now to speak of that mysterious power within ourselves which we call the imagination.

III. *The Power of the Imagination.*

Although the extraordinary phenomena produced by spiritistic and other occult practices are, as we have seen, of a very wide range and varied character, it would be a mistake to conclude that they must all be attributed to the agencies of the unseen world. We have to bear in mind how wonderful the forces of this visible universe are, and how great a portion of the field of human energy remains as yet unexplored. There are many extraordinary phenomena in human nature, for the cause and explanation of which it would be unscientific to resort to invisible spiritual agencies.

Apart from the question (which we propose to consider hereafter) how far magnetic sleep or hypnosis may be ascribed to natural causes, our complex nervous system, which like a delicate

network pervades our entire body, may give rise, especially in persons of sensitive temperament, to very extraordinary manifestations. Persons, too, suffering from morbid affections of a nervous character may be subject to phenomena of a pathogenic order which would not be met with in a person of sound and strong constitution.

In all such cases physical remedies will be found efficacious in restoring to the soul that equilibrium which it has lost, and the lack of which has brought about the abnormal phenomena. A sound body is, as we know, a necessary condition for the operations of a sound mind.

But it is more especially to the power of the imagination that we desire to draw the reader's attention. It is difficult to give a description of the many extraordinary phenomena to which the nerve cells of the human brain may give rise. The brain is the central organ of the imagination, the seat of our sensitive affections and passions, and the starting-point of that complex system of sensitive fibres which pervades the tissues of our body.

It is thus that each exercise of the imagination and each excitement of the passions is accompanied by a corresponding change in some part of our physical organism. Let an exterior object leave its impression upon our sensitive peripheral nerves, the vibrations of which are carried to the

encephalon and thence to the nerves of motion, and the limbs of the body will at once be set moving. And, since it is in the power of the will to impress the imagination as it pleases, we ourselves may be the cause of a variety of strange somatic phenomena.

These are, however, of a certain character only, and are limited in their extent. Not all the parts of our body are equally obedient to our command, and all of them require to be perfected by exercise. It is only by dint of practice that our fingers acquire sufficient ease and agility to play a musical instrument.

In some instances too the imagination is of itself sufficient to produce effects pertaining to the vegetative or animal life. Thus the very thought of saliva may produce its secretion, and the sight of a person yawning may effect in us the same muscular contraction.

In the same way the imagination may produce in us a physical disorder such as hypochondriasis, while in nervous complaints a cure may often be effected by the patient being persuaded that he is really better and that his illness was due to some accidental cause.

Unchecked passions, sudden emotions, an oppressing grief have, as we know, caused many to fall victims to physical disorders, while, on the other hand, moral remedies have in many

instances been potent means of effecting the cure of bodily ailments.

Animals too are not strangers to the influence of the imagination, some being easily affected by music, while others will come to utter articulate sounds in imitation of the voice and action of other animals and of man himself. Animals may also be roused to anger or oppressed by sadness, and for many long years they will preserve the memory of kindness done to them or of harsh treatment received.

It is also a well-known fact that the imagination can determine in us movements contrary to our own desire. Thus, whilst walking confidently along a plank placed on the ground, we are apt to stagger and perhaps to fall if that plank be raised but a few feet, the apprehension of the danger of falling causing a modification of the state of our nerves and producing the effect. The same phenomenon occurs when we find ourselves on the edge of a deep well, or on the platform of a high building, the sense of giddiness which we experience being the natural effect of our startled imagination. Indeed the alarm and apprehension felt may then be so great as to prompt a person to throw himself over, such a movement being nothing more than the effect of the excited imagination presenting the fall as already happening.

But it is especially in sleep that the imagination has fullest play, the operation of the exterior senses being then suspended, and there being no possibility of verifying what it presents. The combination of disconnected previous phantasms then produces dreams, and these are sometimes of so vivid a character as to assume the appearance of reality to the sleeper. Nay, the intimate relation existing between the imagination and the centres controlling the muscular system may produce that natural phenomenon known as somnambulism—a person walking and performing various actions while fast asleep. In that condition the free-will is suspended, so that a person cannot be held responsible for the things he does, even though the will may all the while be explicitly asserting its freedom. Of this, however, we shall have occasion to speak more fully when treating of hypnotism.

What should here be noted is that, however remarkable the phenomena originating in the imagination may be, they are all limited to the particular individual to whom that faculty belongs. It is only in an indirect and mediate way that the imagination can act on another person, such action requiring a means of communication proportionate to the effects produced; that is, it must be of an intellectual, physiological or mechanical order, according as the

intended effect belongs to one or other of these classes.

To the power of the imagination may also be ascribed that other phenomenon known as fascination, which has been the source of so much romance and fiction in times past, and concerning which such exaggerated notions are still entertained by the uneducated masses. The casting of spells over children or over animals (if such a thing really does take place) is wholly due to the working of the imagination. The eyes are the mirror of the soul, and the intense gaze of certain individuals may so impress the imagination of a child as to render it incapable of directing its attention to other objects. Although still possessing that power, it cannot exercise it in the same way in which an adult would, whose will is stronger and whose judgment is more mature. There is no need, therefore, to have recourse, for the explanation of such phenomena, to any theory postulating the existence of some kind of subtle fluid or occult force emanating from the eyes of the operator, and exercising a decisive influence upon the mind of the subject, the power of the imagination being more than sufficient to adequately account for them.

This being the case, great care should be taken to distinguish genuine spiritistic phenomena from what may merely be the effect of some such brain

modification; neither should recourse be had to the theory of superior invisible agents, so long as the effect does not surpass the power of the imagination or of any other natural cause.

It is true we do not perfectly understand the intimate working of our imagination, nor the effects which it is capable of producing; we know sufficient, however, to be able to draw a line beyond which it cannot pass.

This observation holds good in the whole range of physical agents. Although their energy be not thoroughly explored, yet we know enough of their nature to be able to say what they are *not* capable of producing. In the case of the imagination we may say that it cannot act outside its proper subject. It cannot move exterior bodies; it cannot read into distant events; much less can it determine in others the revelation of unknown truths. For these a superior cause is necessary, the nature of which we shall now proceed to examine.

But we must first inquire whether that desire, which nowadays prompts so many to enter into communication with the world of spirits, is itself in harmony with the laws of nature.

IV. *Our Relation with the Unseen World.*

When we propose the question: what judgment is to be passed on the desire men may have of

entering into communication with the unseen world, it must first of all be understood that we are not speaking in this connection of the desire or attempt to enter into direct communication with the souls of the dead. It has been shown that such communication is naturally impossible. Unless therefore it can be excused on the ground of good faith or of invincible ignorance, it must be judged by the same standard by which we judge other desires and actions that are not in harmony with the order of nature.

We are only speaking, then, of the attempts to communicate *directly* and *sensibly* with angelic beings. And the question is: Are these attempts lawful? We reply that all such attempts and the practices connected therewith are naturally unlawful, whatever the moral quality of the beings be with whom intercourse is sought, and this because such a course is directly opposed to the order of nature.

This answer may not meet with the approval of some of our readers, but it will be seen that the very nature of these attempts and desires, when closely examined, does not admit of any other.

Man—a rational being composed of body and soul—was in the beginning endowed by God with external senses, by which he might enter into communication with the outside world, and

more particularly with his fellow-men. Man was thus formed in order that by an attentive study of the book of nature he might obtain a knowledge of invisible things and more especially of God, his Creator, his first beginning, and his last end. These external senses, with which God has endowed us, are amply sufficient for the purpose of leading us to the knowledge of invisible things. Nor is it necessary that we should have recourse to manifestations from spiritual beings, even though some of these beings, by reason of their office, may illumine our minds either by interior disclosures or by sensible manifestations. But this is altogether dependent on the order established by Divine Providence, which so disposes events that we may the more easily attain to the end for which we have been created.

But to presume to obtain such sensible communications with pure spirits, and particularly to seek, by mechanical or other means, to obtain of them extraordinary manifestations, is against the order of nature, not only because angelic beings are superior to man in nature and in perfection, and therefore cannot be summoned by him, but also because any means that man may resort to for that purpose are altogether inadequate. Prayer itself, though the holiest of practices, would be contrary to good order if deliberately directed towards the obtaining of visible intercourse with

angelic spirits, and could only be justified if supported by an inward disposition of entire conformity to God's will. And if such visible intercourse ever does take place, it can only be either by a special act of Divine favour (which we call a miracle), or by some previous compact with some spiritual beings, in which latter case, however, the spiritual beings in question can only be of a low moral or fallen character.

And this holds good even in those cases in which such practices are undertaken solely for the purpose of inquiring into the real nature of these practices and of adding to our scientific knowledge. If the means employed be inadequate—contrary to the natural order of things—they cannot be held justifiable, however lawful and praiseworthy the end may be that one has in view. The law of nature forbids us to do the slightest evil, even though an immense amount of good might be expected to come from it.

V. *Flaws in Spiritistic Practices.*

But there are further points to be considered in connection with this subject, and a closer examination of the moral agents engaged in the production of these phenomena will not here be amiss.

Spiritistic experiments are, as we know, in

many instances entered upon from frivolous and even unlawful motives. The desire of gratifying an idle curiosity, and sometimes even some low passion, is the cause of many persons seeking the excitements of the *séance*-room.

But it is in the manifesting spirits themselves that dishonesty and a low moral character are apt to be detected. Wholly false or contradictory statements are frequently made; obscene and blasphemous language is often mixed with moral and religious utterances, and an inward prompting to commit evil is frequently experienced by those assisting at these practices. The experiments themselves, too, at first undertaken in a serious spirit, often terminate in silly and foolish tricks.

The communications, on the other hand, which are obtained through spiritism, bring to mankind no advantage that is worth mentioning. There has been no disclosure of the secrets of nature; no invention improving or facilitating the relationships of life; no new impulse has been given to art, science, or literature. And there is no prospect of any such useful communication being forthcoming.

Many distinguished scientists, moreover, and men of pure aims and of sound judgment have, after prolonged observation, declared it to be a most perilous thing, both for body and soul, to engage in spiritistic experiments; nay, they have

in many instances pronounced most strongly against them.

From all these things we cannot but conclude that the attempts to communicate with unseen beings are not only unlawful in themselves, but also blameworthy on account of the motives by which they are prompted and the consequences to which they lead. And what should above all things awaken our suspicion is the circumstance of the promiscuous manifestation of the souls of persons known for their good and holy lives together with individuals notorious for their evil character and unholy deeds.

What we are here saying applies more especially to *séances* at which Catholics are present. Not only is there in such communications no allusion to the existence of a final distinction in the respective lots of souls of widely different character, but persons who have throughout life arrived at the highest moral standard are exhibited as being in much the same condition as notorious sinners.

Indeed there is frequently a studied reticence as regards any fundamental distinction between a state of eternal reward and of eternal punishment, and between the respective means leading to either. The statements made as to the supernatural order are as a rule sufficiently vague to admit of the holding of the widest possible creed,

and when pressed for greater clearness and precision the communicators exhibit views of a most pronouncedly agnostic character.

Nor should we omit to note the fact that frequently these spiritistic communications point to the Catholic Church and her institutions as a means of salvation, urging the recipients to enter her communion, and thus leading earnest Catholics to the conclusion that spiritism and spiritistic practices must after all be true and legitimate. It need, of course, hardly be pointed out that by these means the mysterious agents directing the phenomena reach the very height of deception, since they thus effectually set the Catholic Church against herself, and lead many excellent souls astray. Unfortunately, this last aspect of the matter is not always apparent to the superficial mind, and many are those whom utterances of this kind have led completely astray.

VI. *The Surrender of Free-will in Spiritism.*

What we have said thus far has reference to the intrinsic nature of spiritistic practices. But there is also a peculiar extrinsic circumstance which should, on reflection, lead us to view this kind of experiment with strong suspicion. This is the surrender of the will, inducing to a certain extent the loss of self-control, which is a requisite for entering upon these practices.

This loss of self-control need not, as we have already pointed out, be always explicit. It is sufficient that a person, engaging in these experiments, should be ready to habitually submit to the required conditions. The fact that a decided opposition of the will of a particular person is sufficient to prevent any manifestation of that person's mind and, in most instances, also the occurrence of such phenomena as take place when no such opposition is made, is evidence that at least a tacit assent is necessary for their production.

"Mind-passivity indeed," writes Mr. Raupert [1], "would seem to be the keynote of all spiritistic experiment, and the condition by which the spirit-world most effectively carries on its operations on the physical plane."

It has further been observed by men speaking with authority (and their observation has been borne out by experience), that these practices result in a considerable weakening of the natural energy of the will. Persons accustomed to be under the influence of the spirits insensibly acquire such a passive mental disposition as to be in the end helpless and unable to initiate any decided act of the will. This, then, is an evident sign that these practices do not take place without a person giving up, to some extent at least, the use of the

[1] *Modern Spiritism, A Critical Examination*, p. 72.

free-will and surrendering it to those mysterious agents, who may thereby be said to take possession of the entire man.

Now, among God's gifts to man, the first and most precious beyond doubt is the power of free-will, for by it we are rendered capable of both moral good and moral evil. It is in the possession of this prerogative that our superiority over the brute creation chiefly lies. On the good or bad use we make of it in life our eternal reward or punishment depends.

If, then, the free-will is such a pre-eminent part of us that by it we are directly ordained to God, it follows that it may not be blindly and absolutely surrendered except to God alone: and if it be surrendered to His authorized representatives, it can only be in so far as they hold the place of God, never in such things as are intrinsically unlawful.

Now how is the will surrendered in spiritistic *séances?* In the first place, this surrender is not made to God, neither to rational beings known as His authorized ministers or representatives. It is made either to mediums of a doubtful character endowed with no authority over us, or to some mysterious spirits of whom we know but little, and this little sufficient to convince us that they pursue a course wholly at variance with that indicated and willed by God.

For the most part, moreover, this surrender is not merely confined to things lawful, but is, on the contrary, in many instances, made blindly and without limitation, excepting only such things as the invisible agents themselves may choose to indicate.

From all this the unlawfulness of these practices must be apparent, since the will may thus be caused to passively obey any impulse that may be imparted to it.

We must conclude, therefore, that tampering with spiritistic experiments is not only dangerous, but also deserving of blame and condemnation, the highest faculty of a rational being becoming a tool in the hands of unscrupulous agents who can so control and dominate it as to endanger physical health and even the moral character itself.

Nor should we omit to observe that in many instances these unseen agents boldly deny the very existence of free-will—a circumstance which should alone be sufficient to convince us of the unlawfulness of these practices, seeing that it strikes a blow at the very groundwork of the moral order.

VII. *The Presence of Mediums in Spiritistic Séances.*

It may not be without interest to consider here the relation in which the medium stands to the

phenomena—mediums, as is well known, being persons of peculiar temperament and constitution who act as intermediaries between living men and the world of spirits, and through whom the communications from the disembodied souls are supposed to be transmitted to us.

These persons, also called sensitives in the phraseology of modern psychical science, are assumed to be not only the channels through which the manifestations of the unseen world reach us, but also passive instruments for the intelligences to work by, which they accomplish by taking possession of their organism and by controlling its movements.

It is further claimed that the mediums or sensitives supply from their own organism that refined psychic matter which is manipulated by the intelligences for the purpose of constructing or at least of perfecting those forms under which they appear. For this a state of deep trance is habitually required, so that it is on the complete state of unconsciousness of the medium that the success of spirit-materializations usually depends. But the sitters, too, under favourable conditions, supply, it is stated, part of that nerve and vital force, even though no trance state be necessary on their part.

It is not our intention to decide here how far this last assumption corresponds to facts, neither do we wish to cast any reflection upon the moral

character of these mediums, who may conceivably be giving their services for the promotion of science and the benefit of mankind[1]. All we maintain is that the claim that mediums really evoke the spirits of the departed is wholly and absolutely untenable.

We can but refer to what has been said in the preceding paragraphs. If the souls of the departed can neither manifest to us their thoughts nor we ours to them, and if all humanly-initiated communication between the living and the dead be naturally impossible, how can any particular medium be supposed to have the power of evoking the dead and of transmitting to us their thoughts and desires? And the trance-state into which the medium usually passes in no wise helps us to get over this difficulty, seeing that no state of insensibility, of catalepsy, or of nervous excitement, can alter the condition of the departed or their relation to this visible world.

In order to effect any such direct communication between the medium's mind and a departed soul, it would be necessary for the medium's mind to perceive truth in the same way in which the disembodied soul perceives it, i.e. without the concurrence of sensible phantasms; but as long as

[1] "Many of them," writes Mr. J. Godfrey Raupert (*Modern Spiritism*, p. 70), "look upon themselves as willing martyrs in the cause of science and of truth.'

life is in man, that is as long as the soul remains united to the body, such a pure intuition of truth and consequently purely spiritual communication is not possible except through a special intervention of God. But this would be a derogation from the laws of nature which we call a miracle—a thing which has taken place only in the case of the greatest amongst the prophets, the more ordinary manner in which a prophet's mind is enlightened being the formation of sensible images by the ministry of angels. The separated soul has, as we have said, no power over man's brain: and who will maintain that all the communications made to mediums are true miracles?

A medium, therefore, in order to be capable of acting between man and the disembodied souls, would have to be of the nature of the angelic intelligences themselves. To these the departed souls can manifest their thoughts, and they could in their turn, strictly speaking, manifest to us the thoughts of the dead with whom they are in direct communication. But for this the presence of an intermediate person is not required, since we can, as we have shown above, directly communicate our thoughts to angels and *vice versâ*, the intervention of a third person being as a matter of fact entirely superfluous.

From this it should not be inferred, however, that we may hope to obtain, at our pleasure,

sensible communications from departed souls through the ministry of angels, for these angelic beings are not subject to us so as to be at our beck and call. Their ministry with regard to this world's order is essentially subject to God's ordinance: hence they can do nothing without His command, or at least without His permission. When causing some derogation from the order of nature at God's bidding, they act as His instruments, not so when they proceed with God's permission only.

Now, the law of nature demands that we should not have habitual communication with the souls of the departed, whose state is totally different from ours. When, therefore, communications are received from them, they are exceptions to the ordinary course of things, and may either be miracles or not, as the case may be. They are always true miracles when taking place at God's command, the angels then acting as His instruments; they are not so under other circumstances. Now, not only good but also evil angels may act as God's instruments, God being able to make use of any instrument He pleases. Hence, a communication with the dead taking place at God's command, whether through good or evil angels, is always a miracle.

Now it is evident that the communications obtained through mediums at spiritistic *séances* are

no miracles, none of the conditions accompanying true miracles being there fulfilled. These communications, therefore, are due to the intervention of fallen angels acting with God's permission only, and the presence of mediums must in itself be regarded as an unnecessary circumstance which can only result in fraud and deception.

Yet, as mediators are sometimes efficacious means in obtaining at the hand of strangers things which we could not hope to obtain ourselves, so the close intimacy existing between the medium and the demons may induce the latter to make the desired communications, just as in the case of the pythoness of old in relation to the infernal spirits whom she consulted.

VIII. *The Materialization of Spirits.*

The question which we have now to consider is whether Catholic Theology will admit of the idea that the familiar phenomenon called materialization is due to the manipulation by the spirits of some delicate vital or psychic substance emanating from the organism of the sensitive or the sitters ?

To this question we may reply that as angelic substances have the power of transferring the elements of matter from one place to another, there is nothing against the notion of demons abstracting some portions of a sensitive's nerve

or brain-matter and constructing therewith those life-like forms which exhibit all the characteristics and functions of a real human body. And this is so much the more possible as the medium or sensitive, by submitting to this practice, is in some sense under the complete sway of these pure spirits. That delicate organic matter, moreover, may be considered as better adapted for the purpose of giving the appearance of life and motion to these forms than any other matter known to us.

Whatever the facts of the case may be, however, such an extraction of nerve-substance, either from the sensitive or from the sitters, should not be considered as absolutely necessary for the purpose of these manifestations, the angels being well able to borrow the elements required from lower nature, either animate or inanimate. When the angel Raphael appeared to Tobias in the shape of a young man, and walked and conversed with him for many days [1], he surely must have taken the elements needed for his purpose from any but a human being.

Likewise the fact that these materialized spirits are at times seen to eat and to drink should not cause overmuch astonishment; for eating and drinking is one thing, and tasting food and drink or feeding on them is another. It is one thing

[1] Tob. iii. foll.

for a drop of water to be absorbed by the parched earth, it is another thing for that drop of water to be dried up by the rays of the sun. None but an organized body, quickened by a substantial soul, can taste food or display in itself the power of nutrition: eating and drinking, on the other hand, may be apparent only and thus imply nothing more than a dissolution of the elements of food and drink, which dissolution may be followed by a reconstruction of those elements into the previous substance.

Now can a materialized spirit really be said to be truly eating and drinking? No, for the body which seems to absorb food and drink is not its own body; it cannot therefore taste anything nor can it feed on any food; hence eating and drinking in the case of angels is apparent only. A glorified body, on the other hand, such as that of our Lord, may taste food and so may really eat and drink, though it be incapable of nutrition and of growth, as has already been observed.

As regards the phenomenon known as the diminution of weight in the medium or sensitive, this phenomenon can well be explained by the direct action of pure spirits suspending the law of gravity by the application of their own energy.

But if it should so happen that, by God's permission, a sensitive should suffer the actual

loss of some part of his own substance, care should be taken not to give to this fact a false interpretation. It might be supposed to occur in one of two ways.

First, there is the idea that those elements of refined matter retain, in the forms constructed from them, that same nature which they had in the sensitives or in the sitters from whom they were withdrawn. This view must certainly be discarded, since from the moment those elements are abstracted from the body to which they belonged they must needs cease to be informed or quickened by the soul, and consequently must undergo a substantial change.

Secondly, the idea of the possibility of those elements being restored, after the experiment, to their proper subject, in the same way in which they have been abstracted from it, should likewise be abandoned, as it is not in the angel's power to change any extraneous matter into the substance of any living individual except through the natural process of assimilation and nutrition; and these elements, in being abstracted from the sensitive, cease, as we have seen, to be his own vital substance.

To conclude, then, we may maintain that, although the view that the medium and sitters supply, in spiritistic materializations, the substance needed for the manipulation and construc-

tion of sensible forms may be considered as probable, such an assumption is not really necessary to explain the phenomenon, since it can easily be accounted for by the introduction of such elements as abound in nature and are perfectly known to angelic spirits.

That the spirits themselves should so explain the proceedings of materialization is no evidence whatever in favour of their truthfulness and of the objective reality of their *modus operandi*, the purpose of these fallen angels being to create confusion in the minds of men by inducing them, in the name of science, to believe what is but falsehood, rather than to teach them truth. The lack of sincerity evinced in a great many of their utterances is an obstacle to the unconditional acceptance of any of their statements. This, however, will be further shown when we come to speak of the distinction between good and bad angels, and of their respective moral characters.

IX. *Influence of the Medium on the Moral Character of Spiritistic Practices.*

In addition to what has been said of the inadequate qualifications of any living person to act as medium between us and the spirits of the dead, or even between us and the angelic beings,

it should be observed that the practice of mediumship, whatever that may amount to, is surrounded by many dangers both to body and to soul.

The consideration of the evils that usually result from the exercise of these functions ought certainly to be sufficient to deter any person, anxious for his own welfare, from acting in this capacity. The usual effect of these practices is to shatter the bodily constitution, to impair the mental faculties, to instil into the mind a propensity to unlawful acts, and to paralyze the energy of the will. They generate, moreover, in the sensitive a tendency to pass into the trance-state upon the slightest provocation, entailing a loss of physical health which no amount of care is calculated to restore. The medium, in many instances, becomes a moral and physical wreck, ending not unfrequently in the asylum.

Now if a tree be known by its fruit, what must be said of a practice which produces such dire evils?

On the other hand, if the action or presence of a third person be of no avail with regard to communication with the spirits of the dead, and such third person be, strictly speaking, unnecessary to obtain intercourse with the pure spirits, what, it may be asked, can be the object of the spirits in inviting and exacting the mediation of such a person, as though it were a

condition essential to the success of spiritistic practices?

To this question the following answers may be suggested. In the first place, it may be that in this, as in many other occurrences of life in which one deception is used to cover another, the presence of the so-called medium, who must possess certain qualities, is intended to convey the idea that extraordinary conditions are required in order to enter into communication with the dead, and consequently that such communications are in themselves natural and lawful, and that the souls of the departed are really evoked by the medium's intervention. But, however this may be, the practical effect of such a mediation discloses the true character of these *séances*, since they bring those present to implicitly conform to the condition required for these manifestations, which is a state of mind-passivity, that is, the surrender, at least implicitly, of the free-will to these mysterious agents which act through the mediumship of the sensitives.

And here we cannot help pointing out the aim which seems to us to direct these fallen spirits in displaying their power through the ministry of sensitives or mediums. To all appearance this aim is the creation of a kind of travesty of Christ's institution of the sacraments, the dispensation of which is by Him entrusted to the priests of the

Church on the condition that men submit to their ministration. Indeed the relation in which the sensitive stands to spiritistic practices has more than one point of resemblance to the position occupied by the priest of the Catholic Church.

But to state adequately all the circumstances of the case, we must add that the presence and action of a good or "developed" medium, though not strictly necessary, yet greatly facilitates the intercourse between pure spirits and man. The spiritual substance, in order to move man, either intellectually or physically, must make use of his material organism, that is, of the latent energies of his nervous system; hence the greater facility for a pure spirit of acting on a subject endowed with extreme nervous sensibility.

This is the reason why a good medium is so much sought after in these days, and the more frequently it is acted upon, the more apt does the brain-matter become to receive the impression of sensible images, and the more ready is the tongue to give utterance to the corresponding impressions.

Now there cannot be any doubt that to act as a medium is to expose oneself to the perils of actual obsession, the only difference between this kind and ordinary forms of obsessions being that while the latter are more violent, of a lower order, and not limited to any particular time or place, the former are of a milder and more intellectual

nature, recurring only at fixed periods, i.e. when the medium is actually under the influence of the evil spirits. This difference, however, is only an accidental one, and the signs given by the Roman Ritual[1] for the discernment of obsessions are precisely those accompanying the phenomena evoked by the modern medium. But it not unfrequently happens that this milder form of obsession culminates in the ordinary form.

If we are asked, therefore, in what way the medium affects the moral character of spiritistic practices, we reply that his presence goes to confirm their unlawfulness. For if it be true that the presence of a medium be inadequate for the end in view, i.e. communion with the souls of the dead, and that thus one deception is made to cover another, that such a medium, moreover, becomes a means of endangering man's highest faculty, which is his free-will, a mere feeling of misgiving must give place to emphatic condemnation. To have recourse to a medium becomes tantamount to co-operating in a person's actual obsession.

In connection with these observations it may be well to quote here the words of Holy Scripture in which recourse to magicians and witches, whose intervention in olden times was what the medium's intervention is in modern spiritistic practices, was

[1] Tit. x.

made the subject of the strongest possible reprobation.

"*The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers, and shall commit fornication with them, I shall set My face against that soul and destroy it out of the midst of the people*[1]."

"*Neither let there be found among you any one that consulteth soothsayers or observeth dreams and omens, neither let there be any wizard nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead*[2]."

X. *Saul and the Witch of Endor.*

It is possible that some will seek a justification for spiritistic practices in the well-known scriptural narrative of the consulting of the woman of Endor by King Saul. It is recorded of her that she had a divining spirit, and that through her Saul entered into communication with the spirit of Samuel, and ascertained things that were to happen to himself and to his sons[3].

But it will be seen that if this narrative be viewed in the proper light of its circumstances, it constitutes a condemnation of spiritistic practices rather than otherwise.

In the first place, taking it for granted, as the

[1] Leviticus xx. 6. [2] Deut. xviii. 10, 11.

[3] 1 Kings xxviii.

majority of the Fathers of the Church and interpreters of Holy Scripture have taught, that the apparition was no fraud, but really represented Samuel, this cannot be attributed to the power of the witch's magic, since the prophet appeared *before* she had time to begin her incantations. This manifestation, therefore, must have been God's own work, Who, turning into good Saul's infidelity, caused the soul of Samuel to appear, not directly, but through the ministry of good angels, to the end that the evil soon to fall upon that sinful king might thus be made known to him.

In another place in Holy Scripture this act of Saul is expressly condemned as involving a sin of infidelity. "*So Saul died for his iniquities, because he transgressed the commandment of the Lord, which He had commanded, and kept it not: and moreover, consulted also a witch, and trusted not in the Lord, therefore He slew him and transferred his kingdom to David, the King of Isai*[1]."

The unlawfulness of Saul's action is moreover evident from the fact that he himself had previously condemned these practices in having "*rooted out the magicians and soothsayers from the land*[2]."

These observations will go to show how well-

[1] Paralip. x. 13, 14. [2] 1 Kings xxxiii. 9.

grounded has been the aversion which the Catholic Church has ever entertained for spiritism, and they will vindicate the lawfulness of the various measures by which she has endeavoured in all ages to root out necromantic and other occult practices.

SECTION II

DIVERSE KINDS OF ANGELIC BEINGS

It having thus been shown that the manifestations obtained in spiritism are beyond the power of the disembodied souls, and that they manifestly surpass the efficiency of every material element, the natural conclusion is that they are attributable to a different kind of spiritual agents, that is, to angelic beings. Now, a close examination of the nature of these communications having proved them to be attended by physical and moral dangers and by at least an implicit surrender of the free-will, which is unlawful and which leads to acts of immorality and of disorder, the further question which presents itself is: To what kind of spiritual beings are these manifestations to be ascribed? In order to answer this question we must again appeal to Catholic Theology.

As it has been our aim from the outset to exhibit

the angelic beings, their properties and operations, as they first existed in the natural order of things not as they have subsequently become modified by the personal action of these beings, we have hitherto purposely abstained from fully entering into the question of how they are to be distinguished amongst themselves, and in what that distinction precisely consists. This question we now propose to consider. Indeed, it would be impossible to accurately determine the nature of spiritistic phenomena, unless we had recourse to a classification of angels into holy and wicked ones. This classification, even though it did not exist from the very first moment of the creation of angels, is nevertheless as real as the angelic beings themselves.

The object, then, of the present inquiry is to set forth, as clearly and as briefly as possible, what Catholic Theology teaches as to the state in which angels were first created, the defection of some of them from God, the Source of all good, the subsequent separation of the good angels from the wicked ones, and the final condition of those who were unfaithful to their Maker.

I. *The State in which Angels were first created.*

In the beginning, that is, when the material elements of this world were first created, God, by a word of infinite power, brought forth in an

instant and out of nothing, myriads of spiritual substances which were distributed, according to a wisely designed plan, into hierarchies and orders, and which formed an immense choir set up for the honour and glory of the Almighty.

But it was not enough for God to have adorned these noble spirits with most precious qualities of mind and of will; He also endowed them at their creation with the gift of Divine grace, making them thereby sharers in His friendship and heirs of infinite bliss—things they could not possibly have attained to without that supernatural aid. And the spiritual paradise of grace in which they were thus already placed was but the vestibule to that indescribable realm of glory destined for them as their everlasting abode, the only condition for such a reward being perseverance in good.

They all and each possessed free-will, that mysterious power capable of so much good and evil, and they all, without exception, made use of it at the first moment of their creation by consenting, under the motion of the Holy Spirit, to the infusion into them of divine grace, it being a law that grace is not given to any creature having the use of its intellect without its personal consent.

Thus adorned with Divine grace and enriched with the supernatural friendship of God, angels

had only to receive at the hand of their Creator the reward due to their merit by being admitted to the possession of eternal bliss in the vision of the Divine Essence. And in reality all the angelic spirits would at once have been introduced into the everlasting mansions, had not some of them, by an act of supreme apostasy from the Author of all good, placed an unsurmountable impediment to the reception of that recompense. But how did this act of apostasy take place?

II. *The Great Revolt in Heaven.*

The act of rebellion which caused the great division to take place in the angelic host was performed in an instant. Whilst the greater part of those pure spirits persevered in submission to God's ordinances and thus continued in His friendship, entering at once into the possession of eternal bliss, the others chose to follow a different course and presumed to reach their final happiness by their own natural powers, thus despising and rejecting the grace of God. Although desirous of possessing perfect bliss, they adopted the wrong means for attaining it, and it was in this that their act of apostasy consisted.

It is of faith that our last end cannot consist in anything save the possession of God, and that this last end cannot be reached except by God's

help, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life [1]. But these rebellious angels presumed to follow their own course, seeking to be perfectly happy without God, or perhaps to be happy with Him in a way other than He had ordained.

In this manner they placed an insurmountable barrier between themselves and their last end, destroying their previous merit and incurring eternal reprobation. The consequence of which was that whilst the greater number of the angelic substances were immediately introduced into eternal life, the others were hurled into eternal misery.

In order to know how such a catastrophe took place, we must again have recourse to Catholic teaching.

Just as every revolt is headed by some individual who breathes into the others the restless spirit of insubordination, so this body of rebellious spirits was headed by one angel—Lucifer, the brightest and highest of the celestial host, whose seditious cry was taken up by thousands of other spirits, who followed their chief in his attitude of revolt against God.

It was this one act of rebellion which fixed for ever the lot of these proud spirits. They, together with their leader, were at once and irrevocably excluded from eternal bliss. Some of them went

[1] Jo. xiv. 6

to their place of punishment, while others, bearing along with them their endless torments, remained on this earth by a just dispensation of God. Here they have it in their power, with His permission, to roam about, causing various physical evils and tempting men into rebellion against God, in order to drag them along with them into eternal perdition.

III. *The Good and the Wicked Angels.*

It should here be noted that this one act of the rebellious angels decided their lot for eternity, so that there is, in the ordinary course of things, no possibility of a change in their condition. The state of the good angels, on the other hand, is fixed in the possession of perfect bliss. While the latter remain for ever confirmed in good and happiness, the bad remain irrevocably obstinate in evil and plunged in misery, the very nature of the angelic operation being an impediment to a change in their state. The choice once made and the lot determined, that lot remains for ever unchangeable.

The angelic intellect, in fact, does not, like the human intellect, proceed gradually and step by step to the knowledge of truth, nor is it subject to the hesitations which we experience. As it obtains, at a glance, a perfect intuition of things, so does it cling with immovable tenacity to

the objects of its choice, it being impossible for a pure spiritual substance to make a second choice. Thus an angel's eternal lot of necessity shapes itself according to the object of his first choice: he is either happy in the embrace of God, or unhappy far from Him in the engrossing affections of self." "*Two loves,*" says St. Augustine, "*have made two cities: the love of self carried as far as the contempt of God, has made the earthly city; the love of God carried as far as the contempt of self, has made the city of God*[1]."

As the good angels, in their act of submission to God, consecrated for ever to His service their intellectual and moral faculties, all their natural gifts and even their being, so the fallen angels, on the other hand, in their cry of rebellion, debased, once for all, all their natural faculties. The profanation of their very nature was consummated the moment they turned away from God.

And now we must further inquire into the final lot of these fallen angels, and endeavour to answer the following questions:—What changes have thus taken place in their condition; what were the consequences following upon that act of rebellion, and are those consequences of a permanent and unchangeable character?

[1] De Civ. Dei, B. xiv. C. xxviii.

IV. *The Final Condition of the Fallen Angels.*

As already pointed out, the fallen angels, as a consequence of their revolt against God, were deprived of divine grace and of the supernatural gifts of virtue and sanctity which grace carries along with it. Instead of remaining the friends of God, as the good angels are, they became His bitter enemies, their one aim being to supplant God and to set their kingdom against His.

Being excluded, therefore, from the order of Divine mercy, they have no access to the great plan of God, which is *to re-establish all things in Christ*[1]. Whilst the manifold operations of grace are opened, in the vision of God, to the beatified sight of the good angels, those wonderful mysteries of the supernatural life remain a closed book to the rebellious and fallen spirits. Not only are they cut off from the tree of life, but their habitual disposition, which is a most subtle, self-conceited pride, makes it impossible for them to comprehend that mysterious working of grace which is known only to the humble and lowly, and the foundation of which is self-abasement.

Even the divinity of Christ and the superhuman character of His mission, His stupendous miracles on the one hand and His abject helplessness on the other, were to these proud spirits

[1] Eph. i. 10.

incomprehensible mysteries. In the presence of the Messiah they found themselves utterly powerless, and that without knowing the reason why, and without being able to solve the intricate problem. "*What then have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of God?*"[1] was their cry, the full purport of which they probably did not themselves understand. Had they understood, writes St. Paul, "*they would not have crucified the King of Glory*[2]."

Satan indeed might easily have known that Christ was the Messiah promised in the Law, seeing that what the prophets had foretold was fulfilled in Him. From the works which he saw Him do, he might also have inferred that Christ was more than an ordinary man; nay, so evident were the signs of Christ's divinity, that Satan could easily have known Him to be true God, were it not that hatred and envy had darkened his intellect, and had made it impossible for him to receive in himself the pure ray of divine faith.

We may thus say that the devil had not a clear knowledge of the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation and of its relation to the salvation of mankind. But however this may be, he certainly is now ignorant of the mystery of the election and predestination of the sons of God:

[1] Matt. viii. 29. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

a mystery by which our adoption into sonship is completed in time through the merits of Jesus Christ. Again, the fallen angels know not those wonderful workings of Divine grace by which salvation is procured for the elect, being entirely ignorant of the will of God in their respect.

Buoyed up with the satisfaction of partial victories and the hope of greater triumphs, at the same time heedless of his shameful defeats, Satan madly presses forward, seeking to drag the souls of men into eternal perdition.

His standard is ever raised, and his rallying cry is ever one of defiance and opposition: "*I will not serve*[1]."

To this end he hovers around man, prying into his inclinations, his ways, his surroundings, laying snares for him and subjecting him to the ordeal of suffering and persecution, attacking him either openly or by strategy, or withdrawing from him for a time in order that he may be able to attack him better and more effectually unawares. His great weapon above all is lying, "*for he is a liar and the father of lies.*"[2] And this may well be, seeing that although his will is fixed in evil and his mind deprived of the light of grace, yet his natural gifts still abide with him, and he is in this respect like unto the good angels.

[1] Jerem. ii. 20.

[2] Jo. viii. 44.

God, of course, might have condemned all the fallen angels to immediate banishment into hell, i.e. to a state of existence in which they would not have been able to tempt man as they do now. Yet in His infinite wisdom and goodness He decreed that a certain number of them should remain on this earth, in order that they might bring about the fulfilment of His designs, even though they are themselves ignorant of those designs.

In this, however, God does but follow His general rule of government, which is that each part of the universe should be made to contribute to the good of the others, and ultimately to that of the whole. As man derives profit from the society of good angels, so may he also, with God's help, turn into ultimate good the evil schemes of the demons who are thus made to contribute, albeit against their will, to the salvation of souls. This could not take place if all the devils were confined to hell; but now from the fact that some of them are permitted to haunt this world and to tempt man, they are in some way made subservient to God's design, Whose wisdom *reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly*[1].

Whilst, then, the demons are ever busy executing Lucifer's orders and dragging the souls of men to

[1] Wisd. viii. 1.

perdition, they are, as a matter of fact, by an unfathomable disposition of Divine wisdom, executing God's plan in purifying the good, just as fire purifies gold, and in sifting out the just from the unjust.

God's wisdom moreover becomes further manifest, if we consider that He has placed the demons for ever under the dominion of the righteous angels, and that He has assigned to each human being upon his entry into this world a good angel, to illuminate him, to direct his steps, and to guard him against the snares of the infernal enemy. And it is thus that the devil's assaults are checked by the agency of those spirits who remained faithful to God, and that he thus ultimately contributes to the greater glory of the Creator.

Now in what way does the devil attack and tempt man ?

We have seen what is the penetration of the angelic mind, what its wonderful activity, and the range of objects which it comprehends in its knowledge. We have also pointed out the great power which these spiritual beings possess in the universe, and how they can exercise it with regard to organic matter, producing thereby, through their power of moving material elements, the most astonishing transformations. And we have seen that with regard to man himself they can exercise a vast influence, in a considerable degree exciting

and moving his sensitive faculties, the imagination especially being influenced by them in a wonderful manner. From all this we can infer that the fallen angels can assail us in many ways, and that it is easy for them to lead us into evil.

Nevertheless it must be borne in mind that however great the devil's power may be, it has its limitations which have been wisely fixed by Almighty God, and beyond which it is impossible for him to act. He can indeed hurt us, but not beyond what is permitted[1], and he is well aware that his power must before long come to an end. It may be that the knowledge of the short duration of his reign is causing him to increase his activity at the present time; but all his efforts must in the end minister to the unfathomable designs of God's Providence, which permits a certain degree of malignant influence to be exercised upon us only that we may turn to our Maker for help, and that we may, by our merits, gain the victory and win a crown of immortal glory.

[1] See Job i., ii.

SECTION III

HOW THE MORALITY OF SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA IS TO BE JUDGED

Having now shown what the intrinsic nature of spiritistic practices is, and also what the fundamental difference is between the good and the evil angels, we must proceed to apply the principles which we have laid down, and determine how the morality of spiritistic phenomena is to be judged.

For this we shall first have to re-state the principle already mentioned, viz. that the spiritistic phenomena, taken as such, are to be attributed to the action of fallen angels. But the perplexing question remains: Are these intelligent substances really placing us in communication with the souls of departed men, of whatever character these may be?

In order to answer this question, upon the solution of which our verdict as to the morality of spiritistic practices must depend, it will be necessary, in the first place, to examine whether angels in general can act as mediators between us and the souls of the dead; and secondly, whether it is possible for the fallen spirits to represent any departed soul, whether that soul be a holy one, or one of those doomed to eternal death.

It cannot be denied that this question is one difficult of solution, so many different considerations having, of necessity, to be taken into account; but Catholic Theology has its fixed principles, and it is by the following out of these principles that we hope, with God's help, to solve this intricate problem.

I. *The Spiritistic Phenomena must be Attributed to the Action of Fallen Angels.*

The phenomena referred to above surpass, as we have seen, the powers of the visible elements of this world, and cannot be accounted for (and this, indeed, all experienced spiritists admit) except by the action of immaterial causes. Now first amongst these immaterial causes is God, to Whose immediate action it would manifestly be blasphemous to attribute them. To do so would be equivalent to asserting that He Who is justice and holiness sets aside, at the caprice of man, the ordinary course of nature, and directly participates in practices at some time or other attended by moral irregularity of some sort.

It must, in the second place, be granted that the phenomena cannot be supposed to be the work of good angels. These would, strictly speaking, be capable of producing such effects; but as ministers of God's justice and holiness

they cannot be conceived to be co-operating in practices opposed to these Divine attributes.

Neither can the effects be due to the souls of the dead, these being, by reason of their nature, incapable of producing them.

There remains therefore but one solution. The phenomena must be the work of those fallen angels, who, in all ages, have sought to enter into communication with mankind in various ways, and who have, in these modern times, substituted the phenomena in question for the old well-known devices.

Now, bearing in mind that these fallen angels are bent upon destroying God's Kingdom, and upon drawing the souls of men to perdition, and that in the execution of their schemes they may adopt a variety of devices with a view to attaining their end, and that they shrink from no means, however base and immoral these may be, provided they reach their end, we have here the key to the solution of the great problem. We must conclude that fallen angels are the originators of the phenomena in question. It is they who, in response to the invocation of the experimenters, masquerade as the souls of the dead, and thus display before wondering multitudes their great natural knowledge and power, with the object of bringing about the ruin of souls.

This knowledge and power are the gifts of God,

consequently they were originally designed by Him for a nobler and better use. And although that design is frustrated by these evil spirits, it is never wholly so, since He Who directs all things with infinite wisdom, permits the evil only to the end that greater good may ultimately come from it.

But then, it may be asked, is it conceivable that these supposed manifestations of departed souls, though impossible directly, may be brought about indirectly by the mediation of angels representing those souls, and acting in their name? And may we not thus, after all, be said to be in communication with the souls of the dead, even though this be in an indirect manner only?

This is a question which demands consideration, in order that no doubt may remain in the mind as to the real nature of these manifestations.

II. *Whether Angels can act as Mediators between Us and the Souls of the Dead?*

As we have shown in preceding paragraphs, pure spiritual substances, being immaterial intelligences, can converse with the departed souls, and manifest to us their thoughts and desires. But, lest any one should imagine that these spiritistic communications may thus after all come from the souls of the dead through the intervention of evil spirits, a further observation will have to be made.

Let it be borne in mind that we are now speaking of fallen angels only, for although the good angels know the state of the soul after death, and can, strictly speaking, be the means of communication between us and disembodied souls, yet spiritistic manifestations cannot, as has been shown, be attributed to them, since it is altogether inadmissible that these holy spirits, who see God face to face, and who serve Him day and night, should be made subservient to man's frivolity, and should be a means of gratifying his curiosity. Besides this, the very circumstances which usually accompany such communications make it impossible that these phenomena should be attributed to the mediation of good and holy spirits.

But we further maintain that the theory that these communications may be due to the mediation of evil spirits, as though we were, through their agency, really receiving messages from the souls of the departed, is equally untenable.

We may first observe that we do not here deny the absolute possibility of demons in this way representing some particular soul.

Generally speaking, spiritual substances or angels, by assuming the appearance of some departed soul and by manifesting to us its thoughts and desires, can be a means of communication between us and the dead. Such phenomena, did they occur, should not be regarded as deceptions, as

long as the image appearing really corresponds to the personality it represents, that is as long as the disembodied soul is conscious of the manifestation and is willing thus to appear. In this case the body formed by the angelic substance would but stand, with reference to the disembodied soul, in the relation in which an image stands to the person it represents. The honour which we pay to an image is, of course, not paid to the image itself, but to the person it represents. And so, if an angel were to build up a form representing the body which once belonged to a particular discarnate soul, and that soul were to consent to the apparition, we might be said to be conversing with such a soul in a sense truer even than when a subject, speaking to his king through the agency of his ambassador, is said to converse with the king himself.

But, although it may occasionally happen that the good angels in this manner devise a means of communication between us and the disembodied souls, as is for instance the case in the manifestations of the souls in Purgatory, yet can this only take place by a special favour of God (which is nothing short of a miracle), and can in no wise apply to spiritistic practices.

Our claim is that no such communication can take place by the agency of evil spirits, except perhaps with regard to the damned souls only, and this either with or without an immediate and

miraculous interposition of Divine Providence, as the case may be. But we have said that it is impossible for us to know when a demon may be of his own accord representing a damned soul, seeing that no criterion can be assigned wherewith to judge of the truthfulness of such a representation. As to the representation of holy persons through the devil's mediation in spiritistic *séances*, we must again say that such a thought cannot possibly be entertained. Such a representation, whatever the statements made by the spirits about it may be, is mere fraud and deception. However it is necessary that we should now, for the full exposition of this doctrine, turn again to Catholic teaching respecting the final lot of the human soul, and the disposition of Divine Providence in its regard.

III. *The Final Lot of the Human Soul.*

Catholic Faith teaches that when the soul departs this life it is judged by God, and, according to its merits, is assigned its eternal destiny. It either enjoys the friendship and favour of God, or is in a state of revolt against Him. The first state entitles it to everlasting bliss, the second excludes it from the Divine presence for ever.

There is, moreover, this difference between these two states, that while the soul that has died in sin and rebellion against God receives at once its

merited punishment, the soul that is destined to eternal happiness has in most instances some temporal debt to pay to Divine Justice for faults committed during life. It cannot therefore enter at once into its eternal reward, but has to wait in Purgatory until it has "*paid the uttermost farthing*[1]." The human soul after death may therefore be either in Heaven, in Purgatory, or in Hell.

The soul in Purgatory, however, is saved. It enjoys the friendship of God. It belongs by right to the company of the Saints whom it is destined to join, after its debt is paid. There will therefore be finally only two classes of human souls,—the saved and the lost.

A difference may here be noted as regards the mode in which the separated souls may be said to be in the places respectively destined for them, and the mode in which angels, according to their quality, are said to be in heaven, on earth, or in hell.

Although the pure spirits are not composed of matter, they nevertheless so occupy definite places as not to be able to be in two distinct places at the same time. The proper abode of good angels is in Heaven, and the proper abode of fallen angels is in Hell, although both the good and the

[1] Matt. v. 26.

bad angels may also be on this earth, though in a different manner.

The archangel Gabriel, for instance, was locally present with Tobias, and our own guardian angel is ever by our side. These good angels, although enjoying the vision of God (by reason of which they may in some sense be said to be in Heaven), yet are, properly speaking, during the time of their mission among men, not in Heaven, but on earth. It is only when that mission is accomplished that they return to Heaven whence they came.

The fallen angels that are in Hell never leave that place, but those among them that are on earth can be successively in various places, according as they may choose to roam about the earth, and to cause trouble in different localities and to different persons. These latter demons, however, may be said to be in Hell, in the sense that they ever carry with them the consciousness of their doom, and because Hell is their final abode. But in reality they will only dwell in that abode after the Day of Judgment, when their time of hurting and of afflicting mankind will be over.

As regards the souls of the dead, we may generally say that they never leave the place to which they are destined. We must, however, except the holy suffering souls which, when their time of probation is over, pass from Purgatory to Heaven.

As for the souls of the lost, they cannot leave their abode, since their punishment consists precisely in being confined to a place for which they feel nothing but repugnance.

The souls of the blessed could, strictly speaking, leave Heaven for a time and come to this earth; but this could not serve any purpose, as they have no power to form for themselves visible bodies, as the angels have.

There is therefore a very good reason why the apparitions of the *séance*-room should not be attributed to the souls of the departed, of whatever character these may be. They cannot visit this earth, and even if they could do so, their inability to control the elements of matter would make it impossible for them to appear to us. Neither could we make ourselves manifest to them. For this purpose an angel's mediation, good or bad as the case may be, would be necessary. This is the reason why, as we have said above, the apparition of the dead never takes place except through means of angelic substances.

And we must now further inquire whether the fallen spirits can represent—first, the souls of the saints, and secondly the souls of the damned?

IV. *The fallen Spirits cannot represent the Souls of the Saints.*

In the first place, speaking of the souls of the

blessed in Heaven or of the souls that still suffer in Purgatory, we maintain that it is impossible for the fallen spirits to act as mediums in representing them; for these souls are God's special friends, to Whom they are as dear as adopted sons, and Who guards them as tenderly and carefully as if they were the very apple of His eye.

These holy souls, whether in Heaven or in Purgatory, are under God's immediate influence, which influence is exercised, as regards outward apparitions, by the good angels' ministry, and it is inconceivable that the demons, banished as they are for ever from the society of the saints, should be allowed to represent, especially in meetings marked by circumstances of frivolity and not unfrequently by outbursts of irreligion, the friends of the thrice-holy God.

This, we say, holds good equally as regards the souls in Purgatory and the souls in Heaven; for the former, though still in a place of suffering, are notwithstanding so confirmed in good, as to belong exclusively to the society of the saints. If, then, the evil spirits were really to represent the souls of some of the departed, it could only be the souls of the damned, who share the devil's misery, and in whose company they dwell for ever. But now a difficulty arises.

We have asserted that lost souls only could be represented by the fallen angels, who must be

considered to be the authors of the spiritistic phenomena in question. Now can this be maintained in the face of the fact that the images of deceased persons of pure and holy lives constantly make their appearance at spiritistic *séances?* At the present moment, for instance, "Cardinal Vaughan," "St. Charles Borromeo," &c., are said to be appearing at various *séances* in London. Are we not then driven to the conclusion, it will be asked, that since the fallen angels produce the phenomena and could, strictly speaking, represent the souls of lost persons only, these persons are to be counted amongst the lost?

We hasten to reply that such an inference is very far from our minds, and that the very opposite conclusion logically follows from what we have said.

Since the fallen angels are of a low moral character, and their mode of operation is by lies and deceit, it is necessary that we should regard all their doings and sayings with strong suspicion. In order to be able to find out what the truth may be as to their manifestations, we must investigate the ultimate object which they have in view. Now it must be evident that if the spiritistic communications are to be presented as creditable practices, the fallen angels must select for their field of operation the representation of such personalities as have been conspicuous

through life, either for the performance of great and noble deeds, for some scientific achievement or for sanctity of life. It is but natural to expect that men will be induced to practise spiritism, if it can be shown that by these means communications from such persons are obtainable. The fact that the images of men and women of holy and virtuous lives are constantly being presented at spiritistic *séances* is at first sight the best imaginable apology for the lawfulness of these practices.

The presentation of these saintly images, however, constitutes one of the grossest and most subtle frauds imaginable. For these apparitions are beyond doubt made without any co-operation or consent on the part of the persons concerned. They are simply the work of spirits who are familiar with the features and characteristics of those holy men, and who have it in their power to thus travesty them. What, we ask, is more unlikely than that Cardinal Newman or Cardinal Vaughan should now depute bad angels to exhibit in spiritistic circles their own likeness and to act as their spokesmen, disowning, as the case is supposed to be, the doctrine they have taught in life? Indeed, no seller of false merchandise has ever approached the dishonesty practised in this regard by the fallen spirits.

They, we repeat, cannot in any way represent

the souls of the blessed in Heaven or of those still suffering in Purgatory. It cannot be admitted that such souls are willing to manifest their thoughts to the evil spirits and to make use of their mediation in order to communicate with mortal man. God, too, Who is sanctity itself, could not permit, much less ordain, that those who are His spiritual friends should be represented by His sworn enemies.

But of the souls of the damned what is to be said? Can the view be entertained that spiritistic practices may put us, through the agency of demons, in communication with the souls of the damned?

V. *Whether Evil Spirits can represent the Souls of the Damned?*

To this question our answer is that there is nothing repugnant to the idea that reprobate souls, which are doomed to share for ever the company of the devils, should at times, by God's special order, manifest themselves to us through the mediation of fallen angels. For these souls can, on the one hand, manifest their thoughts to the evil spirits; and the evil spirits may, on the other, act as mediators in manifesting to us those souls' thoughts and desires.

Now the question is, does it ever happen in

spiritistic *séances* that demons thus act as mediators between some reprobate soul and man?

If we were to accept the statements made in spiritistic communications, it would be difficult for us to give to this question a definite answer. For in the utterances of the *séance*-room no distinction, as a rule, is made between saved or lost souls, all the apparitions claiming to be in a like state of comparative bliss. This involves, however, an evident contradiction, seeing that the personalities that are supposed to be evoked are often known to have lived lives very varying in character, so that it becomes more than improbable that they should all be in the same place of eternal recompense.

But to adequately solve the proposed problem we may here distinguish a two-fold question: first, do the evil angels of their own accord represent, in the way explained above, the souls of the damned? Secondly, do they ever do so at God's command and as His instruments?

The answer to the first question is that, strictly speaking, there is nothing against the idea that with God's permission such a representation should take place. As the devils and the damned souls communicate with each other, the possibility of some such communication through spiritistic practices is not altogether to be rejected.

There is, however, the practical impossibility of ascertaining whether such a thing ever actually takes place.

Spiritistic utterances having often been found to be mere falsehood and deception, we have no guarantee for the truthfulness of any single spiritistic communication. What could possibly be the aim, moreover, on the part of the devil to make use of such mediation? For what purpose should he make himself the spokesman of any damned soul? Surely not in order to make us avoid sin, in which he rejoices, or to prevent our losing our eternal happiness, of which he is deadly envious. Neither could it be for the purpose of asking our prayers on behalf of some lost soul, as both the devil and the damned know very well that in hell there is no redemption. There is, on the other hand, nothing which such lost souls could desire us to know about their state or place of captivity which the devil does not know equally well.

Should any one here object that the prayer made by the rich man unto Abraham, entreating that patriarch to send to his father's house Lazarus in order that he might testify to his relatives, and that they might not come to the place of torment [1], it may be observed that the prayer was made directly to Abraham, and that the

[1] Luke xvi. 22-31.

devil's intervention was not sought for; that the motive, moreover, which prompted the rich man to make that petition was not a desire for his relatives' salvation, but rather the fear that his own torments might be increased by their damnation, which he no doubt foresaw might be due to his own wicked example.

As a matter of fact, then, we may say that no assertion on the part of fallen spirits, either in connection with spiritistic practices, or in any other manifestation whatever, short of God's command, is sufficient to establish the fact that the living are through their means in communication with any damned soul. It may, on the contrary, be confidently asserted that the pretence of placing us in communication with the souls of the dead, whatever their lot may be, is only, as regards those fallen angels, a skilful contrivance to cover under vain delusions and phantoms the dreadful reality of the irreparable loss of eternal life, which is the consequence of mortal sin.

The second question to be considered has reference to fallen angels acting not merely with God's permission, but at His express command. Can the fallen angels, at God's bidding, occasionally represent a damned soul?

The answer is that there may well be cases in which, God so ordaining, a damned soul may at man's request, or even without it, manifest its

own state or its own thoughts through the devil's mediation, although, as we have said, this cannot be the case in spiritistic *séances*, which are not sanctioned by God. It is not impossible, then, that demons, under God's command, may move the tongue of a dead man doomed to eternal death to manifest, for his own confusion and for the instruction of mankind, his irreparable loss, or that they should, by some phantastic apparition, represent the misery and torments of that man's soul, God so ordaining, with a view to the deterring of others from wrong-doing.

But as such occurrences would be true miracles, and as, on the other hand, sanctity is the ordinary condition of a true miracle, such diabolical interventions should be accepted only when accompanied by circumstances precluding the possibility of fraud and delusion.

The idea that such miraculous manifestations can take place by means of spiritistic practices should be entirely dismissed, spiritistic practices being habitually accompanied by irregularity and levity, and sometimes even dishonesty ; a miracle, on the contrary, professing to be, according to Cardinal Newman's definition[1], "*the signature of God to a message delivered by human instruments.*"

Should any doubt still remain in the inquirer's

[1] *Two Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles.* London, 1890. P. 10.

mind, the extraordinary frequency of spiritistic communications would be sufficient to preclude all idea of such phenomena being in reality miraculous manifestations of the dead, infrequency being one of the distinctive marks of true miracles.

We must conclude, then, that spiritistic practices do not place us in communication, through the devil's agency, with the souls of the damned in Hell. On the other hand, it is impossible, as we have said, that the fallen angels should represent the souls of the saints either in Heaven or in Purgatory. The spiritistic manifestations, therefore, inasmuch as they pretend to place us in relation with the disembodied souls of men, are deceptions and nothing more.

But if this be so, what judgment is to be passed on practices, the end of which is trickery and fraud?

VI. *The Unlawfulness of Spiritistic Practices.*

Having thus inquired into the various sources from which the spiritistic manifestations could conceivably be supposed to emanate, we have come to the conclusion that they cannot be due to God, nor to the action of the good angels, nor to the souls of the departed, whether they be saved or lost.

They must therefore be ascribed to the action of fallen angels who, under the guise and appearance

of some known deceased personality, speak and act as fancy or the circumstances of a particular case may direct. In the case of holy souls these communications are sheer deceit and fraud, these souls being unwilling thus to appear to men; and as regards the damned souls, their appearance in spiritistic circles through the ministry of demons cannot again be admitted by reason of the immoral character of these fraudulent performers.

Hence we should never infer that because certain souls appear at a *séance* through the ministry of demons, those souls must be counted amongst the lost. The utterances of evil spirits being wholly unreliable, spiritistic communications cannot afford us sufficient ground for asserting anything as to the final condition of any human soul that is said to appear.

Indeed no confidence whatever can be placed in communications obtained at spiritistic *séances*, the very nature of which opens the door to fraud and deception. And if at times some great truth would seem to find expression by them, it can only be as a means of inducing belief in other statements emanating from the same source, and in the practices themselves by which those statements are elicited.

Now if it be asked why we should not have recourse to evil spirits to ascertain something as to the state of the souls of those whom we cannot

very well conceive to be in the company of the blessed, we reply that we are never justified in entertaining the thought that any particular person, whom we may have known to have led a notorious life of sin, is amongst the lost. The mercy of God is infinite, and such a person may very well have turned to Him in the last moment of life, so that it becomes a duty, not of charity only but of justice, to refrain from even suspecting that person to be amongst the lost.

The evil spirits, on the other hand, being separated from the friendship of God, cannot be for us authorized channels of information. They are cut off from the company of the Saints, and are deprived of all supernatural influence; free intercourse with them can therefore but expose us to deception and temptation, and become one of the greatest evils in our life. Finally, as these practices have been condemned by God, we would, in promoting them, be continuing Satan's revolt against Him. "*Because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel; and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey*[1]."

This being so, it becomes the manifest duty of all who have a sense of their own dignity and a proper care for their soul's safety, to shun practices which expose them to so many evils of both body

[1] 1 Kings xv. 23.

and soul, and which are so apt to lower their moral standard.

Love to and reverence for their Maker moreover, should lead them to abstain from communication with beings who are His avowed enemies. "*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,*" writes St. Paul, "*but rather reprove them*[1]."

SECTION IV

HYPNOTISM

A certain affinity having been shown to exist between spiritistic and hypnotic phenomena, we now propose to inquire into this latter subject and to briefly set forth in what hypnotism properly consists, and what are the effects which hypnotism allied with suggestion is apt to produce upon the human mind.

We shall then also examine the question as to the morality and lawfulness of hypnotic practices in general, and of those involving the surrender of the free-will in particular, pointing out the difference which exists between this latter act and that form of surrender which is involved in the taking of a vow of obedience by religious persons, a practice seemingly bearing some resemblance to what is exacted in hypnotic experiments.

[1] Ephes. v. 11.

We shall thus be able to form some judgment as to what constitutes the use and what the abuse of hypnotism, and to distinguish between mere hypnotic cures and true miraculous occurrences.

I. *The Nature of Hypnotism.*

Hypnotism is a peculiar form of sleep with which modern science has made us familiar, differing from natural sleep in that it is induced by the will or by the influence of another person. This influence may be exercised in a variety of ways, the most familiar ones being gestures, words of command and of authority, touches by the operator's hands, a prolonged fixing of the eyes of the subject either upon those of the operator or upon some crystal ball or luminous disk, and the like.

Thus hypnotic sleep also differs in character from that induced by artificial means and narcotic substances, such as ether, chloroform, opium and alcohol, this latter form being brought about by the assimilation and absorption of these substances, while the former is due to the use of mechanical and external agents only. Hypnotic sleep is induced by the entire or partial suspension of exterior sensibility.

But a still more radical difference between the hypnotic and other forms of natural or artificial sleep lies in the circumstance that in these latter no habitually tacit surrender of the will of the

subject is necessary, as it often is in hypnotism. A mere assent to the use of the above-named natural substances is sufficient to produce the desired effect, whereas hypnotic sleep is not usually brought about unless the patient submits his will, at least implicitly, to the will of the hypnotizer.

II. *The Effects of Hypnotism.*

Many of the effects of hypnotism are more or less common to the other kinds of artificial sleep. Such are the so-called somatic phenomena which consist in prolonged sleep, in a marked rigidity of the limbs, and in a profound though temporary perturbation of the nervous system. Such also are, to some extent, lethargy or coma, catalepsy, and somnambulism. All these effects, however, are common too to a special form of intense natural sleep in which very great varieties of phenomena may occur, depending on food and drink, and on the subject's special state of health and of mind.

What constitutes the peculiar characteristic of hypnotic sleep is *suggestion*. Thus a person may, at the command of the operator, pass into a cataleptic state, lose his powers of sensation, and become obedient to the voice and will of the operator. The latter, and he only, may then make a suggestion with a view to the removal of some form of sickness or pain, or may exact obedience

as regards some action to be performed at a particular time and in a particular manner. The subject himself will, upon awaking, have no conscious knowledge of the idea suggested, but will nevertheless, when the time comes, obey the suggestion made or execute the command received.

Yet another form of hypnotic influence consists in the giving of a mental order to a person at a distance and in causing that person to fall asleep and to execute the order while the state of hypnosis continues.

Hypnotic phenomena indeed are, as is well known, of a varied and complex character, and are remarkable for their caprice and irregularity. They have this, however, in common, that whilst the imagination is most actively at work, the free-will as well as external sensibility are in suspense, except that in many instances the sight as well as the hearing are sensible to the impression of exterior objects, and the tongue remains capable of uttering articulate sentences. In such cases, however, these organs, as well as the other senses, are so disordered and the nerves of sensibility so perturbed and paralyzed, that the phenomena which occur have nothing in common with those attending the ordinary process of nature.

Now what judgment are we to form as to the lawfulness of hypnotic practices? Must they be condemned altogether, or are there circum-

stances under which we may have recourse to them?

III. *Whether Hypnotism be lawful?*

In the first place it is hardly necessary to say that any such practices undertaken with a deliberate evil intent, such as the eluding of the laws of moral order, cannot of course be justifiable under any circumstances. This must be self-evident to all right-minded persons, and is a fact which does not call for any further comment.

The chief question is: Is it lawful to resort to these practices for medical purposes with a view perhaps to curing some obstinate complaint or disorder? And may they be employed for the purpose of discovering some new secret that would otherwise remain unknown, and that might, when properly applied, further the advance of arts and of sciences?

In reply to this question we can but point to the unanimous answer given by Catholic theologians, viz.: That it is the abuse of hypnotism and magnetism, not their use, which is to be condemned. This, in substance, is the import of decisions given by the Roman Congregations[1] at various times.

[1] Cf. Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, June 23rd, 1840; Idem, April 21st, 1841; Sacred Pœnitentiary to the Bishop of Lausanne, July 1st, 1841; Holy Office, July 28th, 1847; Idem, May 21st, 1856; March 30th, 1898.

The more urgent question therefore is: What constitutes the use and what the abuse of hypnotism?

It must be admitted that the forms under which these practices present themselves are so varied, and the phenomena induced by them so numerous and so complex, that it is not an easy matter to draw a line of demarcation and to say precisely where use ends and where abuse begins. We cannot therefore in any wise pretend to offer a final solution of these intricate problems; we shall nevertheless endeavour to point out how we may distinguish the one from the other, and wherein practices that are right and lawful consist.

If a physician, anxious to spare a patient the agonizing pain of a severe operation, places under his nostrils a cloth moistened with chloroform and the patient by inhaling it falls into a profound sleep and consequently is spared all pain, there can be nothing in such an act that could be considered as a breach of the moral law. This could only be the case if the state of unconsciousness were made use of with an evil intent, and if the patient, deprived of the use of his free-will, were then induced to commit acts of an immoral character.

There can likewise be nothing blameworthy in causing a person to gaze at a metallic object for

the purpose of producing in him a temporary condition of strabism ultimately terminating in sleep. Both as regards man and the animals, in which the same effect can be induced, such a process would be wholly permissible. It would become an immoral proceeding only when the effect is induced from a wrong motive and the state of unconsciousness is made a means to an unlawful end.

So long, therefore, as the operator's intention is good and there is no objection to the material means used for the induction of sleep, which in the subject is a mere state of insensibility with its natural consequences, no law can be considered as broken and no moral obligation is violated. Thus far, then, hypnotism may be employed just as any other medicinal means are employed with a view to the attainment of a beneficial end not contrary to the law of morality.

IV. *The Surrender of Free-will in Hypnotism.*

There is, however, a good deal more to be said on the subject, and there are circumstances connected with some hypnotic practices which must be pronounced to involve a breach of the moral law, and which constitute its abuse.

This is the surrender of the free-will of the subject to the control of the hypnotizer. This surrender need not necessarily be explicit, the free-will

being surrendered by the simple fact that the subject agrees to submit to the hypnotizer's influence by obeying his suggestion. That this surrender is often an essential condition for the successful carrying out of the experiments is evident from the fact that the hypnotized subject has no control over himself when actually following the suggestion received, and has afterwards no recollection whatever of the acts which he has performed.

We know, moreover, that it is just the resistance of the will of the subject which constitutes the real obstacle to the induction of the phenomenon. It may be that hypnotic sleep can be induced in a person against his will; but then no power of suggestion can compel such a person to execute a command given, especially if, instead of the act of submission, there has previously been one of definite and active resistance to the exercise of any such power.

Now, when we consider that free-will is the first and greatest of all human attributes, and that it should be surrendered to God alone Who is the Author of it, it becomes evident that its surrender for the purpose indicated is an unlawful practice and constitutes an abuse.

But there is another reason why implicit or explicit surrender of the will in hypnotism should be regarded as unlawful.

Such a surrender, being made in a general way,

opens the door to all kinds of irregularity, both on the part of the subject and on that of the operator, and may induce practices opposed to the law of order and morality. The history of hypnotism furnishes ample illustration in support of this statement. And if it be objected that such surrender can be restricted to purely therapeutic effects, we reply that even this cannot be considered as lawful, since the things pertaining to our physical health, such as the functions of our vegetative life, are not really dependent on our will, which is of itself naturally unable to restore health.

It is true, of course, that suggestion, apart from any previous compact, may, in certain forms of mental disease, cause in the patient the impression that the trouble has passed away, and it is thus possible to relieve pain and to restore health either partially or even entirely. In this case, however, the imagination, not the will, is immediately under the operator's sway, and the effects obtained are attributable to the imagination itself, not to an unseen superior agent, introduced into the field of operation through the explicit or tacit surrender of the patient's free-will. The reader should here recollect what we have said above of the power of our imagination [1].

But it should be borne in mind that the effects

[1] Page 191, foll.

obtained by simple suggestion are always confined within certain limits, being proportionate to the cause by which they are produced, which is a natural cause. Hence the cures thus obtained belong to the realm of medical science, and indeed should not be confounded with true miracles which, being the immediate work of God, surpass the forces of the whole creation.

It is in order to ascertain how far complaints connected with the nervous system can be alleviated or even altogether eliminated by the activity of our imagination that the subject of hypnotism has recently been studied with so much perseverance by earnest physicians. We may hope that with the results of fresh experiments added to the store of the knowledge we already possess, a fixed standard may be established by which it may be possible for us to determine what simple natural suggestion can do and what it cannot do. However this may be, we may confidently say that there are effects which the power of imagination is certainly unable to produce. These are the phenomena belonging to the intellectual order and which are common to suggestion and to spiritism. Such, for instance, are the various forms of clairvoyance, and to these the remarks we have made concerning spiritism equally apply. Since the surrender of the will, which is a necessary condition for obtaining these effects, is an inadequate and

consequently unlawful means of obtaining them, the employment of such means must be pronounced as irregular. Agents, other than those visible to the eye, are here certainly operating, with whom we should hold no intercourse.

To sum up, then: hypnotism, employed in a lawful manner, i.e. simply as a means of inducing artificial sleep and with a view to certain therapeutic effects, has nothing in it that could call for condemnation; when it is attended by explicit or implicit surrender of the will, either wholly or partially, it is unlawful.

V. *The Vow of Obedience.*

An objection might here be raised on the ground that the religious vow of obedience, made for life and to another person, really involves a surrender of the will, and that there is no reason why a similar surrender should not lawfully be made to a physician for a good purpose.

This objection is a weighty one, and demands consideration. We will now endeavour to point out the difference existing between these two forms of surrender of the human will.

The vow made by a religious is, in the first place, ordained to an object of superior moral good, that is, to eternal life, in which the end of the supernatural order consists. The restoration of bodily health, on the other hand, for which hypnotism

and suggestion would seem to have been primarily ordained, is not a thing of superior value, for the possession of which free-will may be surrendered. In fact, hypnotism in most cases implies not merely a suspension of the will, as happens in ordinary sleep, but the submission of it to the hypnotizing agent. Now, to suffer such a loss—the loss of the greatest natural good we possess—even though it be only for a time, for the sake of an inferior good (bodily health), is not a course which can commend itself to any person of sound judgment.

There is, furthermore, a difference between the extent of the surrender of the free-will in the case of hypnotism and in that of religious profession. A religious, by his vow, not only does not bind himself to obey his superior in such things as are unlawful, but even as regards good and holy things he only binds himself with respect to those that are stated in his rule, the vow of obedience being made by a religious according to the rule he professes. A person, on the other hand, submitting to the process of hypnotism, exposes himself to the risk of following blindly the hypnotizer's will, whether the command he receives be moral or immoral. Hypnotism, therefore, opens the door to the possibility of a person committing any crime, however monstrous, which the hypnotizer may suggest, without its being possible either

to trace the true culprit, or to requite, according to justice, the evil that may have been perpetrated. For this reason men, having at heart the morals of society, have pronounced against practices carrying with them such dreadful consequences.

But there is a still more marked difference between religious profession and hypnotic suggestion. This difference consists in the diverse ways in which liberty is surrendered in these respective acts. A hypnotized person, by the circumstance that he is bound to execute the orders he receives whilst deprived of the use of his senses, parts with his physical liberty; he becomes a mere tool in the hands of the hypnotizer, to be handled by him as he may think fit. In thus executing the hypnotizer's commands, he is incapable of merit or of demerit; he has not the actual responsibility of his acts, except in a general way, that is, in so far as by consenting to be hypnotized, he virtually assumes all the possible consequences of that act. A religious, on the other hand, is always free in all his actions; his vow does not take away from him the physical possibility of breaking his promises, and the fulfilment of his obligations is for him always a source of additional merit.

Hence we must conclude that there is a vast difference between religious profession and the surrender of free-will as taking place in hypnotistic practices. The first ennobles man, placing

him under the moral necessity of doing good and of avoiding evil; the second debases him, by stripping him of that most precious gift which raises us above the brute creatures, and which causes us in a certain sense to resemble the Godhead.

VI. *Use and Abuse of Hypnotism.*

The surrender of the free-will, being the element which brings hypnotism into close affinity with spiritism, hypnotism of necessity shares the condemnation pronounced on spiritism, except for the reservation which we have just stated, that is where no surrender of the will, either explicit or implicit, takes place.

While there is nothing in spiritism to justify its practice, hypnotism and magnetism can be lawfully employed as an artificial means for the production of natural and beneficial effects. There is nothing contrary to the moral law in the induction, by means of looks, gestures, touches, sounds, light, &c., of a state of artificial repose. As long as it is a question of allaying pain and of restoring health we can but welcome it and thank God for this additional gift by which He has benefited mankind. Its abuse only begins with the surrender of free-will; apart from that, there is in hypnotism no more disorder than what may be found in the use of anæsthetics, of alcoholic or narcotic

substances. Hypnotism claims a therapeutic influence just as much as these natural agents.

But when hypnotism is made to bring about effects of an intellectual order, surpassing the power of material agents and implying a previous surrender of the will,—when the sight of a hypnotized person, for instance, becomes capable of piercing an opaque screen and of contemplating scenes taking place at great distances, when the patient begins to speak in unknown tongues, and to execute with the utmost precision schemes traced out by the hypnotizer, it is then that the abuse of hypnotism begins, and that the agency of invisible beings, tacitly invoked, must be assumed as the only cause capable of producing such effects.

It should further be observed that even though the effects of hypnotism were confined to that ecstatic sleep which is accompanied by vivid impressions of life in an imaginary world, it should still be viewed with strong suspicion. A practice is good only in so far as it fits man to spend his present life in a proper manner, so that he may attain to his true end, which is life eternal. But hypnotic sleep makes man live an unreal life in an unreal world. The pleasure of this state is the more enticing because the entire bodily system participates in it. Such a practice, therefore, so far from fitting man for his real life and its duties, is but calculated to make him dissatisfied with him-

self, and to lead him to seek a renewal of those pleasures which usually result in a lowering of the moral character, and often also in the loss of physical health. Hence experience has yet to show that hypnotism, quite apart from the question of the surrender of the will, and from unlawful communication with fallen spirits, is really a gain.

Now what is to be said as to its therapeutic effects? Have the cures which it is said to have wrought anything to do with those supernatural occurrences which we call miracles? This weighty question we will now examine.

VII. *Hypnotic Cures.*

Hypnotic cures, having in recent years been urged as an argument against the supernatural character of the miracles wrought at some of the famous Catholic shrines or at the invocation of Saints, it is necessary that we should endeavour to determine in what the difference between them and authentic miracles consists. We say authentic miracles, because it must be borne in mind that not all the occurrences popularly described by that term are recognized as genuine by the Catholic Church.

It is well known that the Church has at all times exercised the keenest discrimination in this matter. What even the unanimous voice of the

people has proclaimed to be miracles of divine power has often been pronounced by ecclesiastical authority to be but ordinary events not exceeding the powers of nature. Care in the examination of evidence and ample time for the forming of a correct judgment are the tests which the Church invariably applies to occurrences of an unusual character brought to her notice. While a single conceivable possibility remains of a cure having been effected by natural or artificial means the Church does not pronounce in favour of a miracle.

But if there are unauthenticated miracles, there are also a great many about which no doubt whatever can be entertained. Not only is Holy Scripture full of such genuine marvellous occurrences, but even in our days most wonderful cures have taken place, at the invocation of God's name, and by the intercession of His Saints. And these cures bear along with them such indisputable tokens of evidence, that eminent scientists have pronounced in their favour and have declared them to be above the power of nature.[1]

Now the cures obtained by hypnotism are for the most part of a neuropathic and hysterical nature. The means employed, viz. sleep and suggestion, are sufficient to account for the removal of

[1] See Dr. Boissarie; *Lourdes, Histoire médicale.* Paris, Victor Lecoffre.

such ailments, or at least for an improvement of the conditions attending them. Such cures, moreover, are not unfrequently followed by relapse or by some mental or physical disorder.

Miraculous cures, on the other hand, are cures wrought in persons suffering from deep-seated organic affections, for the removal of which no magnetic sleep, no æsthesiogenic agent, no concentration of the will are sufficient. And such cures are, as a rule, physically perfect, and are never wrought to the detriment of the sufferer's intellectual faculties.

Hypnotic cures, therefore, only tend to bring into prominence the greatness of the divine power in controlling by true miracles the elements of nature and in causing effects superseding the laws of the universe.

VIII. *Affinity between Hypnotism and Spiritism.*

Having thus shown what the nature of hypnotism is, and in what the abuse which often accompanies hypnotic practices consists, we have now to consider the question as to the affinity existing between it and spiritism, and whether in hypnotism too the presence and action of unseen spiritual agents must, sometimes at least, be admitted.

It is not easy to give to this question an answer as categorical as in the case of spiritism, hypnotism admitting, as we have seen, of a right and proper

use, and its perfectly natural phenomena being so intimately connected with preternatural effects. These very effects, however, may be instrumental in providing us with the means of forming some judgment as to when and under what circumstances unseen spiritual agents may be supposed to be at work in hypnotism.

If hypnotic practices merely give rise to such effects as occur in other forms of sleep, whether natural or artificial, there is no reason why we should suspect therein the action of superior spiritual agents. And even those abnormal conditions which are induced in the form of lethargy and somnambulism, hallucinations, intense insensibility and rigidity of the limbs, nay more, a certain power of seeing imaginary objects, are all in themselves natural phenomena, and need not necessarily be connected with preternatural causes.

But the case assumes a different aspect when a person, at the hypnotizer's suggestion, begins to speak in an unknown tongue, reads writing covered by opaque material, discusses scientific topics previously unknown, describes events occurring beyond the reach of the seer's natural eyes, or betakes himself mentally to some distant country, giving a detailed and accurate account of what he there sees.

The same applies to the facility with which a hypnotizer, by the exercise of his will, comes to

induce hypnotic sleep in a person placed at a distance from him, and entirely unconcious of the fact that such an influence is being exercised.

Now if on the one hand we reflect that we possess no direct power over the will of our fellow-men, that we cannot by the mere exercise of our will move his limbs or act upon his nervous system, that men's minds cannot naturally know by intuition what is happening at distant places; and if, on the other hand, we bear in mind that angelic substances can act directly on the nerves of our body and on our imagination, and can thus determine in us most wonderful physiological intellectual and mechanical phenomena, we shall have no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that if amongst the effects of hypnotism some may be attributed to natural causes, others cannot be accounted for except by the immediate agency of pure spiritual substances which we call angels.

And as these cannot belong to the class of faithful angels, who never act in this world except at God's command and as His ministers, it follows that these effects must be attributed to the action of the fallen angels who, with divine permission, may exercise their natural power over the elements of matter, thereby causing a variety of remarkable effects, mechanical, physiological and psychological.

Nor is it to be wondered at that fallen angels

should thus place themselves at the service of mankind, seeing that they thus more easily attain the object which they have in view, and which is control of the mind and the moral ruin of the individual concerned. The world of evil, we may well believe, does not make any concession to man without exacting some infinitely greater gain and advantage.

Hypnotism, then, although harmless in itself, that is as a natural means of inducing insensibility with a view to securing artificial sleep, becomes an immoral and unlawful practice when involving the surrender of the will of the subject, and thus comes to share the character and to merit the condemnation of spiritism.

CONCLUSION

FROM the various considerations urged in the preceding pages it will have become clear what the ultimate aim of spiritistic practices is, and what object the fallen angels have in view in producing such remarkable phenomena, and in thus personating the souls of the dead.

We have said that the sin of the fallen angels consisted in the determination to reach their last end by their own power, that is, without the aid of Divine grace, and it is in precisely the same direction that the practices and revelations of spiritism tend.

It is a small thing that the phenomena, demonstrating as they do the existence of a spirit-world, should go to confirm the philosophical and theological tenet respecting the immortality of the human soul, and that they should thus deal the death-blow to materialism. This concession is not made by the fallen angels without an adequate compensation, and without their using it as a means of furthering their own ultimate ends. And these ends are in reality most effectually

furthered by belief in the doctrine that man can reach a state of final beatitude by his own strength and without the aid of supernatural grace offered to him through the Incarnation.

We cannot too strongly insist upon the importance of recognizing the fact that the immortality of the human soul can be established with sufficient clearness by the natural reasoning of the human intellect. What the explicit declarations and wonderful phenomena of spiritism claim to demonstrate is therefore but a confirmation of the voice of both nature and reason. The claim is advanced by the spirits merely with a view to inducing the world to accept the doctrines which they ultimately connect with this truth, the underlying principle of which has been stated above.

It is well known that in spiritistic communications the Christian means of salvation are proclaimed to be but vain, and at best unnecessary, institutions. What these communications aim at is the promulgation of the doctrine that final happiness may be attained regardless of the moral character of the present life and independently of God and of the means of grace instituted by Christ. The very silence which the spirits invariably observe as to the necessity of obedience to Christ and His Church is evidence of the truth of what we assert. It implies emancipation from

the supernatural life of grace, and contempt of the Christian law regulating the spiritual life.

But it is important that the reader should clearly understand what the principal tenets of the modern spiritistic creed, which is being so assiduously propagated at the present time, are. A modern author who has gathered a great deal of information on the subject [1] presents them as follows. The disclosures of the spirit-intelligences, he writes, may be said to agree on these points :—

1. "That Christianity cannot be regarded as a revelation of an unique and specific character, foreshadowed in the Jewish ordinances, foretold by prophet and seer, and completed and consummated on Calvary and on the day of Pentecost ; but that it is one of many forms of high spirit-manifestation designed to enforce upon man the binding obligations of the moral law inherent in his nature, and to remind him of the true character of his high origin and destiny."

2. "That Christ is not divine in the sense in which the Church throughout all ages has understood that term and has believed and taught Him to be divine. That He is, on the contrary, a human being like ourselves—at best perhaps a spirit of a high order and possessed of remarkable

[1] J. Godfrey Raupert: *Modern Spiritism; a Critical Examination, &c.*, (London, 1904) pp. 240 and foll.

gifts and powers, Who, descending from the higher spheres and assuming a human body, was content to lay down His life as a testimony to the truth of the doctrines which He taught."

3. "That the teaching of the Catholic Church respecting His character and person and the aim and purpose of His death, is based upon a misconception, due to human error and weakness, and to subsequent philosophical thought and speculation."

4. "That there is no priesthood specially set apart and ordained by Christ with a view to perpetuating His work and to forming the link between the sphere of the human and the Divine."

5. "That the Church, with its sacramental institutions for the effectual carrying out of this work, and for the raising of the human soul to a supernatural life, for the imparting to it of supernatural gifts and graces, is a vain thing fondly invented, and at best an institution of mere human origin and doing a purely human work."

6. "That the scriptural notion of retribution after death and of punishment for sin committed in the flesh is a misreading and misinterpretation of the words of Christ and of those feelings of failure and of loss which necessarily attend the slow process of human evolution, retribution only taking place in the sense that suffering must follow upon

wrong, wilfully or ignorantly done, in order that thus the way to right doing and to right conduct may be found."

7. "That man is daily and hourly, by his own deeds and misdeeds, and by the general moulding and shaping of his character, preparing for himself his own heaven or his own hell; that these are, however, far other than those which theology holds and inculcates."

8. "That physical death does not in any sense determine the destiny of the human spirit; but that, irrespective of personal beliefs or dis- or misbeliefs, its training and education are continued and indefinitely prolonged in the spirit-spheres."

9. "That man is in fact, in the truest sense of the word, *his own Saviour*."

It is worth while observing here that these very statements constitute either wholly or in part the doctrines of some modern writers who have chosen to depart from the traditional teaching of the Church. It is not too much to say that whilst the spirits' influence is being exercised openly on ordinary minds by the manifestation of wondrous occurrences, it acts in a more subtle and refined way on the minds of those writers of note, pressing upon them the promulgation of an altogether new Creed. In both cases the end aimed at is the very destruction of Christianity.

From all this it must be evident to all impartial minds that spiritism, whilst seeming to advance man's intellectual and physical good, is in reality a most effectual means of drawing him away from God, and from the only way by which God can be reached, which is the Church.

As a means of communication with pure intellectual substances, spiritism has existed at all times. It is only in its form that it has undergone some change. As regards this form it would seem to stand in very direct relation to the movements of contemporary science, and it is no doubt this circumstance which imparts to the phenomena such peculiar and widespread attraction. It was but natural that in view of the extraordinary discoveries made in recent years in physics, mechanics and chemistry, the minds of men should be fascinated by new and unheard-of physical, mechanical and chemical phenomena, admitting of scientific examination, and holding out such rich and transcendent promises. Now, by imitating and even surpassing the effects of natural agents, pure spiritual substances can thus easily conceal their operation and gain access to man. They can even, on the pretence of furthering scientific progress, induce man to indulge in these unlawful practices, and thus attack him unawares.

This is so much easier in an age when the study

of the human soul and its faculties, and of the angelic nature and the spiritual world in general, is so greatly and universally neglected.

We insist, then, that it is only by a thorough study of Catholic philosophical principles, and of the deductions which flow from them, that the true character of spiritism and of practices akin to it can be determined. Other forms of philosophy, plausible though they may seem at first sight, will be found to be inadequate for this purpose.

When we come to look at the subversion of the natural order, consequent on spiritistic practices, when we see the terrible ravages which these produce in the souls of men, when we consider the moral dangers to which they expose society, it becomes impossible to pass any but an unfavourable judgment upon such practices.

It is, on the other hand, a significant circumstance that in spite of all that can be urged in favour of these phenomena, and of their systematic examination, Catholic Theology finds it as impossible to reconcile itself to these practices to-day as it did in the ages that are past. It holds that whatever the pretensions of spiritism may be, it is the continuation of Satan's revolt against God, and must end in the irreparable ruin of souls. And it should be borne in mind that there are some eminent scientists who have echoed the voice of the Church, and who, fully alive to

the nature and tendency of these practices, have denounced their pernicious influence and have warned men against the moral and physical dangers attending them.

We are not without hope that their and our voice will be heard, and that Christian men and women, made to the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the Precious Blood of Christ, will cease to fall a prey to the snares of the avowed enemy of God and of mankind. He who diligently seeks for truth, can find it both in the book of nature and in revelation, and need not have recourse to deceitful and masquerading spirits.

If we desire temporal and spiritual favours, an easy way is open to us: it is that of recourse to humble prayer in conformity to the law and will of the Almighty, the Giver of all good. If we yearn for happiness, we have a pledge of coming bliss in the promise of the vision of God, face to face. But the fulfilment of this promise is made dependent on one condition:—the practice of good works in the observance of the divine law. "*Make me to understand the way of Thy justifications, and I shall be exercised in Thy wondrous works*[1]."

[1] Psalm cxviii. 27.

THE END.

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